Louis Cousin

Histoire de l'Eglise
Tome 1 bis

Vie de Constantin
Discours de Constantin
Eloge de Constantin

par

Eusèbe de Césarée

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Suivie

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HISTOIRE
De la Vie de
L'EMPEREUR
CONSTANTIN,
E'crite par
EUSEBE,
Evêque de Césarée.

Traduite par Monsieur COUSIN, *Président en la Cour des Monnoies.*

TOME I.
SECONDE PARTIE.



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Chez DAMIEN FOUCAULT, Imprimeur & Libraire ordinaire du Roi.

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LA VIE DE L'EMPEREUR CONSTANTIN,

Ecrite par Eusébe Evêque de Césarée.

LIVRE PREMIER.

CHAPITRE PREMIER.

PREFACE.

Nous avons vû deux fois les réjoüissances publiques, avec lesquelles tous les peuples ont célébré en l'honneur de l'Empereur, les jeux qui se renouvellent de dix en dix ans, depuis le commencement de son régne. En la vintiéme année j'eus l'honneur de relever la grandeur de ses victoires, par un discours que je prononçai en presence des saints Evêques, au milieu desquels il étoit. Depuis peu, & en la trentiéme année de son Empire, je fis dans son palais un autre panégyrique à sa loüange. Je voudrois bien conti-

nuér maintenant son éloge. Mais la nouveauté des objets qui m'environnent, me donne de l'étonnement, & me réduit au silence. De quelque côté que je me tourne, soit vers l'Orient, ou vers l'Occident, soit que je regarde le ciel ou la terre, l'image de ce Prince se presente à moi. Je voi les Princes ses enfans, qui comme de nouveaux astres, répandent par tout l'univers la splendeur de sa puissance, & le font régner avec une autorité plus absoluë que jamais. Ils ne joüissoient pendant sa vie, que de la dignité de Césars. Mais maintenant, ils ont succédé à tous ses titres aussi-bien qu'à sa piété.

CHAPITRE II.

Suite de la Préface.

J'AVOÜE que je suis ravi en admiration, quand je considére que cét Empéreur qui conversoit, il y a peu de jours, parmi nous dans un corps mortel, reçoit aprés sa mort, & lorsque la nature rejette tout ce qui lui est inutile, les mêmes honneurs & les mêmes loüanges qu'il recevoit durant sa vie. Que si je porte mon esprit jusques au ciel, & que j'y voie sa bien-heureuse ame, qui s'est dépoüillée d'un vêtement corruptible, pour se revêtir de l'immortalité, & qui a changé un Roiaume temporel, & sujet à mille foiblesses, avec un autre qui est éternel, & qui n'a ni imperfection, ni défaut, je demeure comme interdit, me condamne moi-même au silence, & laisse le soin de le loüer à la parole éternelle & divine, qui peut seule confirmer invinciblement la vérité de ce qu'elle avance.

CHAPITRE III.

Honneurs rendus aux bons Princes. Châtiment des Tirans.

CETTE parole infaillible & immuable a fait voir, dés cette vie, l'accomplissement de ce qu'elle avoit prédit; que ceux qui l'honoreroient, en seroient récompensez, & que ceux qui se déclareroient ses ennemis, seroient les auteurs de leur propre ruine. Elle a montré combien la fin des Tirans, qui prennent les armes contre Dieu, est funéste, & combien la mort qui a terminé l'heureuse vie de Constantin, est elle-même heureuse, souhaitable, loüable & digne d'étre consacrée par des monumens solides & durables. Les hommes, qui d'eux-mêmes ne sont que foiblesse, ont trouvé une foible consolation contre la mort, quand ils ont fait le portrait de ceux qu'ils vouloient honorer, & qu'ils ont espéré d'éterniser leur mémoire, ou par une image de cire, ou par une statuë, ou par une inscription gravée sur le bois, ou sur la pierre. Il ne faut pas un fort long espace de tems pour détruire ces monumens, qui ne representent que le corps, & qui ne conservent rien de l'ame. Cependant ceux dont l'espérance a les mêmes bornes que leur vie, s'en sont contentez. Mais Dieu qui est le commun Sauveur de tous les hommes, & qui prépare aux personnes de pieté, des récompenses qui sont au dessus de nos pensées, leur en donne comme un gage & un échantillon dés ici bas. Ce sont les promesses contenuës dans les livres des Prophétes, & accomplies en la personne de ceux qui ont été éminens en sainteté, & sur tout en celle de nôtre incomparable Empereur, qui s'étant rendu plus

agréable à Dieu qu'aucun de ses prédécesseurs, a été proposé à nôtre siécle comme un parfait modéle de vertu.

CHAPITRE IV.

Honneurs rendus à Constantin.

DIEU qui l'avoit choisi pour autoriser la piété dans toute l'étenduë de l'univers, lui a été favorable durant le cours de son régne, & depuis le commencement jusques à la fin. Il l'a mis seul entre les Princes sur un lieu élevé, comme une éclatante lumiére, pour éclairer tous les peuples, & comme un éloquent Prédicateur, pour publier les saintes maximes de la véritable Religion.

CHAPITRE V.

Années de sa vie & de son régne.

DIEU l'a maintenu un peu plus de trente ans sur le trône, & un peu plus de soixante sur la terre. Comme il l'avoit destiné pour étre une image vivante de sa puissance; il l'a fait triompher de l'orgueil aveugle, & de l'impiété desespérée des Tirans & des Géans, qui avoient pris les armes contre sa Majesté souveraine & éternelle. Pour eux ils sont dissipés, presqu'aussi-tôt qu'ils avoient commencé de paroître, au lieu que Dieu qui est seul, a armé son serviteur seul contre la multitude des impies, lui a donné la force de les exterminer de dessus la terre, & l'a établi comme le Docteur de tous les peuples, qui déclare hautement qu'il ne connoît qu'un Dieu & qu'il déteste les Idoles.

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CHAPITRE VI.

Piété de Constantin récompensée par ses victoires.

Il fit gloire de se dire serviteur de Dieu, & s'aquita fidélement des devoirs, ausquels cette qualité oblige. Dieu, en récompense, le rendit Maître de ses ennemis. Lui accorda de plus glorieuses victoires, qu'il ait jamais accordées à aucun autre, étendit son autorité sur un plus grand nombre de nations, que celle de ses prédécesseurs, ne s'étoit jamais étenduë, & le combla d'un bonheur qui ne fût interrompu d'aucune disgrace dans tout le cours de son régne.

CHAPITRE VII.

Constantin comparé à Cyrus & à Aléxandre.

L'Ancienne Histoire n'a jamais célebré aucun Prince qui ait paru sur le trône avec autant d'éclat que Cyrus. Cependant toute sa vie n'a pas été heureuse, puisque sa mort a été infame, & que non seulement elle a été violente, mais qu'elle lui a été procurée par une femme. Les Grecs publient qu'Aléxandre réduisit à son obéïssance une infinité de nations. Mais ils demeurent aussi d'accord qu'aiant ruiné sa santé par l'yvrognerie, & par les débauches, il périt misérablement, avant que d'étre parvenu à un âge parfait. Il ne vécut que trente-deux ans, & n'en régna pas plus de dix. Il passa avec une impétuosité égale à celle de la foudre, ruina les Villes, & réduisit en servitude les nations. Mais au tems qu'il

qu'il pleuroit la perte d'un jeune garçon, dont il avoit été éperdûment amoureux, la mort l'enleva dans la fleur de sa jeunesse, & dans un païs étranger, sans enfans, sans postérité, de peur qu'il ne troublât plus long-tems la tranquillité publique. Son Roiaume fut partagé à l'heure-même par les Officiers qui avoient autre-fois combattu soûs ses enseignes. Ce n'est cependant qu'à l'excez de ces desordres qu'il doit sa réputation, & on ne le loüe que de ce qu'il a commis tant de crimes.

CHAPITRE VIII.

Constantin réduit presque tout l'univers à son obéïssance.

Nôtre Empereur commença de régner à l'âge, auquel ce Roi de Macédoine cessa de vivre. Mais il vécut deux fois autant de tems que lui, & en régna trois fois autant. Aprés avoir établi dans son armée une discipline toute conforme à la modestie & à la piété Chrétienne, il la mena jusques en Angleterre. Il réduisit à son obéïssance la Scythie, ce Païs qui s'étend si avant dans le Nort, & qui est habité par divers peuples. Il étendit les bornes de son Empire d'un côté jusques en Ethyopie vers le Midi, & de l'autre vers l'Orient. Il répandit la lumiére de sa piété jusques aux Indes, & gagna de telle sorte l'affection des Princes, des Seigneurs & des Satrapes, qu'ils lui envoioient des Ambassadeurs & des presens, qu'ils lui érigeoient des statuës dans leur Païs, & qu'ils y rendoient son nom plus célébre que n'avoit jamais été celui d'aucun Empereur. Il faut pourtant avoüer qu'il souhaittoit bien moins d'étre connu de ces peu-

peuples, que de leur faire connoître Dieu, dont il publioit la gloire.

CHAPITRE IX.

Constantin laisse à ses enfans l'Empire qu'il avoit reçu de son pere.

Les paroles par lesquelles il a publié cette gloire ont été soûtenuës par des actions solides, par la pratique constante de toute sorte de vertus, par la piété, par la libéralité qu'il a exercée envers ses amis & ses proches, par la clémence dont il a usé envers ses sujets. Dieu, dont il avoit avancé la gloire, a récompensé ses longs travaux d'un régne éternel. Il lui a donné trois fils pour successeurs de sa puissance, & elle passera à leur postérité par une succession continuelle. Il semble qu'il n'y a que Dieu, qui lui a fait des honneurs si extraordinaires sur la terre, & qui l'a élevé à une gloire immortelle dans le Ciel, qui puisse tracer dignement son éloge, dont il conserve le sujet écrit en des caractéres qui ne se peuvent effacer.

CHAPITRE X.

L'Histoire de la vie de Constantin est utile ou même nécessaire au public.

Bien que je comprenne assez combien il est difficile de parler dignement du bon-heur qui a accompagné cét incomparable Prince dans tout le cours de sa vie, au lieu qu'il n'y a nul danger à s'en taire, je ne puis néanmoins me dispenser d'en tracer un léger craion pour le faire con-

noître à la postérité, & pour éviter au même tems le reproche que l'on me pourroit faire que j'appréhende le travail. Car bien que j'aie fort peu de suffisance, je croi devoir emploier le peu que j'en ai à relever le mérite de ce Prince qui s'est perpétuellement occupé à procurer la gloire de Dieu. Je suis même persuadé que ce sera un ouvrage fort utile au public. Ne seroit-ce pas une chose honteuse qu'il se soit trouvé d'excellens esprits qui aient écrit l'Histoire de Néron, & de quelques autres Empereurs encore plus scélérats que lui, & qui aient traité avec beaucoup d'élégance un sujet si odieux, & que je passasse sous silence les éminentes qualitez d'un Prince auquel l'antiquité n'a jamais eu de pareil, & que Dieu m'a fait la grace non seulement de voir, mais de connoître, & d'entretenir familiérement?

CHAPITRE XI.

Qu'il ne sera parlé dans la vie de Constantin que des actions qui regardent la piété.

Il me convient mieux qu'à nul autre de publier ce que je sai des vertus de nôtre Empereur, & de le faire connoître à ceux que les bons exemples excitent à l'amour de Dieu. Quelques-uns ont entrepris par amitié, par haine, ou par vanité d'écrire des vies où il n'y avoit rien de recommandable, & des actions qui n'étoient pas bonnes à être imitées. Ils ont quelque-fois emploié des termes fort magnifiques pour représenter les crimes les plus atroces. Ils ont exposé aux yeux de toute la postérité des actions qui devoient être ensevelies sous les ténebres, & ont enseigné le mal à des personnes innocentes, & qui par une faveur particuliére de Dieu n'en avoient point de connoissance.

sance. Je n'ai pas comme eux les avantages de l'éloquence pour embellir mon sujet. Mais j'ai un sujet dont la beauté peut donner des ornemens au discours. Ceux qui apportent à la lecture un esprit bien disposé, n'en sauroient faire de si utiles que celles qui contiennent des actions de piété. C'est pourquoi je ne croi pas devoir maintenant representer les guerres, les batailles, les victoires, les triomphes de Constantin, ni les loix qu'il a faites pour le gouvernement de son état, & pour le bien des sujets. Je passerai soûs silence toutes ses autres entreprises, & ne parlerai que de celles qui regardent le service de Dieu. Je choisirai les plus propres à être transmises à la postérité, & en ferai le récit en moins de paroles qu'il me sera possible. C'est ici le tems de publier avec une entiére liberté les loüanges de cét incomparable Empereur. Il ne m'étoit pas permis de le faire durant sa vie, à-cause des changemens, ausquels l'inconstance des hommes est sujette. Je prie Dieu & son Verbe Divin, de m'aider dans ce travail. Je le commencerai par le récit de ce qui arriva à Constantin dés sa jeunesse.

CHAPITRE XII.

Constantin est élevé dans le Palais des Tirans, comme Moïse l'avoit été.

Il est rapporté dans l'ancienne Histoire que les Juifs furent autre-fois traitez fort tiranniquement par les Rois d'Egypte. Mais quand Dieu eut agréable de les délivrer du joug de cette injuste domination, il disposa de telle sorte de l'éducation de Moïse, qu'il fut élevé dans le Palais des Rois, & qu'il y apprit les maximes du Païs. Lorsqu'il fut parvenu à âge d'homme, & que la justi-

ce divine voulut venger les innocens, & châtier leurs persécuteurs, le Prophéte sortit de la Cour pour exécuter les ordres de Dieu. Il se sépara des tirans, qui l'avoient nourri dans son bas âge, & se joignit à ses freres. Dieu l'établit Chef des Juifs, les délivra de la servitude par son ministére, & fit tomber du ciel les châtimens sur les tirans qui les avoient opprimez. Cette ancienne Histoire est connuë de tout le monde, bien qu'elle soit prise par plusieurs pour une fable. Le même Dieu a produit en nôtre siécle un miracle, qui n'a rien de fabuleux, & qui aiant été exposé à nos propres yeux, est plus certain que tout ce que nous saurions apprendre par le rapport d'autrui. Les tirans ont pris les armes contre Dieu, & persécuté son Eglise. Constantin, qui les a depuis exterminez, a vécu avec eux dans sa jeunesse, comme Moïse le fidéle serviteur de Dieu avoit vécu avec ceux d'Egypte. Bien qu'il fût en un âge fort susceptible de mauvaises impressions, il ne prit aucune part à la corruption de leurs mœurs. La bonté de son naturel, soûtenuë par l'Esprit de Dieu, ne se porta qu'à la piété, à laquelle il fut aussi excité par l'exemple de son pere. Nous ne saurions nous dispenser de parler de ce pere si célébre, de Constance le plus illustre Empereur de nôtre siécle, ni de remarquer en peu de paroles ce qu'il y a dans sa vie, qui peut relever la gloire de Constantin son fils.

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CHAPITRE XIII.

Constance s'abstient de persécuter les Chrétiens.

PENDANT que l'Empire étoit gouverné par quatre Princes, Constance garda une conduite toute contraire à celle des autres, & entretint inviolablement la paix avec Dieu. Il s'éloigna toûjours de l'impiété avec laquelle ils attaquérent l'Eglise, & ruinérent de fond en comble les lieux de nos assemblées & de nos priéres. Il ne soüilla jamais comme eux sa consience par l'effusion du sang innocent. Jamais il ne s'assujettit comme eux au culte des Idoles, & jamais il ne contraignit comme eux ses sujets de subir le joug de la même servitude. Il procura aux peuples une paix profonde, à la faveur de laquelle ils pussent vaquer sûrement aux exercices de la piété. Au lieu que les autres Empereurs surchargérent si fort leurs sujets d'impositions, qu'ils leur rendirent la vie plus fâcheuse & plus insupportable que la mort; Constance gouverna les siens avec une douceur paternelle. Comme ses loüanges sont dans la bouche de tout le monde, je ne choisirai qu'une ou deux de ses actions, par où l'on pourra juger du reste, & je commencerai à traiter le sujet que je me suis proposé.

CHAPITRE XIV.

Constance remplit par adresse le tresor public, & rend à l'heure-même à ses sujets tout ce qu'ils y avoient apporté.

COMME Constance étoit en grande réputation de modération, de douceur, de pieté, & qu'en effet il traitoit si favorablement ses sujets, que son tresor étoit presqu'épuisé, Dioclétien, qui étoit le premier & le plus ancien des Empereurs, envoia lui reprocher le peu de soin qu'il prenoit des intérêts de l'Etat, & la pauvreté à laquelle il se réduisoit lui-même par sa négligence. Constance ordonna aux Ambassadeurs de Dioclétien, de demeurer quelque tems à sa Cour, & à l'heure-même aiant envoié quérir les plus riches de ses sujets, il leur déclara qu'il avoit besoin d'argent, & que c'étoit une occasion où ils pouvoient lui donner des preuves de l'affection qu'ils avoient à son service. Il n'y eut personne qui ne portât avec joie de l'or, de l'argent & des meubles précieux au tresor roial, & qui ne s'empressât d'exécuter les ordres de son Prince avec plus d'ardeur & de zele que les autres. Quand le tresor roial fut rempli d'un amas prodigieux de toute sorte de richesses, Constance les montra aux Ambassadeurs de Dioclétien, & leur dit, qu'il y avoit long-tems qu'elles étoient à lui, & qu'il les avoit laissées jusques alors, comme en dépôt entre les mains de ses sujets. Les Ambassadeurs s'en retournérent fort surpris d'étonnement. On dit qu'aussi-tôt qu'ils furent partis, Constance loüa l'affection que ses sujets lui avoient témoignée, & leur rendit ce qu'ils avoient apporté à son tresor. Cette action est sans doute une grande marque

que de sa douceur. J'en raporterai une autre qui est une preuve de sa piété.

CHAPITRE XV.

Persécution excitée par les autres Empereurs.

LES Gouverneurs des Provinces persécutérent par l'ordre de Dioclétien tous ceux qui faisoient profession du culte de Dieu. Les premiers qui combattirent pour la défense de la Religion, & qui s'exposérent au fer, au feu, & à toute sorte de périls & de supplices, furent des Officiers de la Cour. Les Princes qui les condamnérent à la mort, perdirent par leur faute les meilleurs sujets qu'ils eussent, & se privérent du fruit des priéres qu'ils faisoient continuellement pour la prospérité de l'Empire.

CHAPITRE XVI.

Constance chasse de son palais les Chrétiens, qui avoient voulu sacrifier aux Idoles, & y retient ceux qui avoient refusé de le faire.

CONSTANCE, au lieu de suivre leur exemple, prit une résolution pleine d'une rare sagesse, & se porta à une action fort merveilleuse, & que l'on ne sauroit entendre, sans être surpris d'étonnement. Il donna le choix à tous les Officiers de sa Cour, & même aux Juges qui étoient élevez aux premiéres dignitez, ou de sacrifier aux Idoles, & de conserver leur rang & leurs charges en sacrifiant, ou s'ils refusoient de sacrifier, de perdre leurs charges, & ses bonnes graces. Lorsqu'ils se furent déclarez, & que les uns eurent pris un parti,

parti, & les autres un autre, Constance découvrit le secret qu'il avoit tenu caché jusques alors, blâma le trop grand desir que les uns avoient de conserver leur bien, & leur vie, les déclara incapables de leurs charges, & jugea qu'aiant été infidéles à Dieu, ils ne seroient pas fidéles à leur Prince. Il loüa au contraire la fidélité des autres, jugea qu'ils ne seroient pas moins attachez au service de leur maître, qu'ils l'étoient à celui de leur Dieu, qu'ils défendroient l'Empire avec plus de courage que les autres, & qu'ils en feroient la principale force, & le plus riche tresor.

CHAPITRE XVII.

Piété de Constance envers le Sauveur.

VOILA le craion que je voulois faire légérement de la vie & des mœurs de Constance, pere de Constantin. Quiconque considérera avec quelque attention, la maniére dont il est mort, reconnoîtra aisément la différence que Dieu a voulu mettre entre sa fin & celle des autres Princes. Aprés avoir donné durant plusieurs années l'exemple de toutes les vertus dignes d'un grand Empereur, aprés avoir reconnu le seul Dieu qui a créé l'univers, & avoir condamné l'impiété de ceux qui en adoroient plusieurs, il fortifia son palais par les priéres des personnes de pieté, & passa le reste de sa vie avec autant de repos que de réputation. Il joüit de ce bonheur si rare, que plusieurs font consister à ne recevoir aucune injure, & à n'en faire à personne. Durant le cours paisible de son régne, il consacra toute sa famille, l'Impératrice sa femme, & les Princes ses enfans au service de Dieu, qui est le Souverain des Empereurs. Sa Cour étoit une assemblée de véritables

bles Fidéles, parmi lesquels il y avoit de saints Ministres, qui faisoient de continuelles priéres pour la conservation de la personne du Prince, au lieu que dans la Cour des autres Empereurs, il n'étoit pas permis de parler des Chrétiens.

CHAPITRE XVIII.

Constance se trouve le plus ancien des Empereurs. Il a un grand nombre d'enfans.

DIEU ne laissa pas sa piété sans récompense. Il eut bien-tôt aprés le premier rang parmi les Empereurs. Les deux plus anciens aiant renoncé, par je ne sai quel motif, à la souveraine puissance, en la seconde année de la persécution, il fut reconnu en qualité de premier. Il y avoit longtems qu'il avoit été déclaré César, avec Galére. Mais aprés qu'il eut rempli cette dignité avec beaucoup de gloire, il fut élevé au comble des honneurs, & proclamé le premier des Empereurs. Il eut un plus grand nombre d'enfans qu'aucun de ses Collégues. Lorsqu'il fut prêt de paier, dans une extréme vieillesse, le tribut que tous les hommes doivent à la nature, Dieu fit en sorte que Constantin son fils-aîné se trouva present, pour recueïllir la succession de l'autorité souveraine.

CHAPITRE XIX.

Constantin fait un voiage en Palestine avec Dioclétien.

CONSTANTIN vivoit alors au milieu des Collégues de Constance son pere, de la même sorte que Moïse avoit vêcu dans la Cour des Rois d'Egypte. Lorsqu'il fut parvenu à la fleur de son âge,

âge, il se mit en grande considération auprés d'eux. Je le vis alors passer par la Palestine à la droite de Dioclétien le plus ancien des Empereurs. Pendant que tout le monde couroit en foule pour le voir, & pour admirer les marques de générosité & d'élévation qui paroissoient sur son visage. Il n'y avoit personne qu'il ne surpassât en hauteur, en bonne-mine, & en force. Il étoit pourtant beaucoup plus avantageusement partagé des vertus de l'ame, que de celles du corps. Il avoit un excellent naturel qu'il avoit cultivé par l'étude, & que Dieu avoit relevé par les dons d'une sagesse celeste.

CHAPITRE XX.

Constantin va trouver Constance son pere.

L'ARDEUR de son courage, & l'élévation de son ame, donnérent de la jalousie & de la crainte aux autres Empereurs. Quand il eut découvert leur mauvais dessein, & les piéges qu'ils lui avoient dressez il s'enfuit comme Moïse, & alla trouver son pere. Dieu le favorisa en tout cela d'une protection si visible, que l'injustice de ses ennemis lui ouvrit en quelque sorte le chemin, par-où il arriva à l'Empire.

CHAPITRE XXI.

Mort de Constance.

CONSTANTIN aiant heureusement évité le piége que ses ennemis lui avoient dressé, arriva enfin aprés un long voiage auprés de Constance son pere, qu'il trouva proche de sa fin. Lorf-

Lorsqu'il le vit de retour, en un tems où il ne l'avoit pas esperé, il se leva à son séant, l'embrassa étroitement, assura qu'il étoit délivré par sa presence des inquiétudes, dont il avoit été agité, remercia Dieu de lui avoir fait cette grace, & témoigna qu'il étoit content de mourir. Aiant ensuite mis ordre à ses affaires, & pris congé de ses enfans, qui entouroient son lit, il laissa selon la loi de la nature, son Empire à Constantin son fils aîné, & passa de cette vie à une autre.

CHAPITRE XXII.

Constantin est proclamé Empereur.

L'EMPIRE ne vaqua pas par la mort de Constance. Constantin se revêtit à l'heure-même de la pourpre impériale, & fit renaître en sa personne toutes les vertus de son Pere. Les funérailles du Prince défunt furent célébrées avec une pompe extraordinaire. L'air rétentissoit des cris de tout le peuple, qui témoignoient qu'il trouvoit heureusement le pere dans le fils, & qui se réjoüissoit de lui voir prendre possession de l'autorité absoluë. Les Provinces étoient ravies de joie, de ce que Dieu avoit si promtement pourvû à leurs besoins.

CHAPITRE XXIII.

Mort des Tirans.

JE ne croi pas devoir parler ici de la mort de ceux qui ont persécuté l'Eglise, ni deshonorer la mémoire des bons Princes, par le récit des crimes

mes des méchans. Les malheurs qui leur sont arrivez, sont plus que suffisans pour instruire & pour corriger ceux qui en ont été témoins.

CHAPITRE XXIV.

Constantin parvient à l'Empire par l'ordre de Dieu.

VOILA comment Dieu, qui a créé l'univers par sa puissance & qui le gouverne par sa sagesse, a élevé lui-même sur le trône Constantin fils de Constance, de sorte qu'il s'est réservé lui seul la gloire de sa promotion, au lieu que celle des autres Princes appartient souvent aux hommes.

CHAPITRE XXV.

Victoires remportées par Constantin sur les Anglois.

DÉS qu'il fut en possession de la souveraine puissance, il visita les Provinces qui avoient relevé de l'obéïssance de son pere, & y donna tous les ordres nécessaires. Il domta les peuples qui habitent sur les bords du Rhin, & de l'Océan, réprima leur insolence, & appaisa leur fureur. Il y en eut d'autres, qu'il se contenta d'arrêter par la crainte, & de retenir au de-là de leurs frontiéres; & c'étoient des naturels farouches & intraitables, qu'il ne pouvoit porter par aucun moien à entretenir la paix. Aprés étre venu heureusement à bout de ces desseins-là, il jetta les yeux d'un autre côté, passa en Angleterre, & la réduisit à son obéïssance.

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CHAPITRE XXVI.

Constantin entreprend de délivrer Rome.

CONSIDERANT ensuite l'univers comme un vaste corps, dont Rome étoit comme le chef, qui gémissoit sous la domination des Tirans, il crût d'abord que les Princes qui gouvernoient les autres parties de l'Empire, & qui le surpassoient en âge, devoient emploier leur puissance pour la mettre en liberté. Mais quand il vit que ceux qui l'avoient entrepris, n'en avoient remporté que de la honte, & que nul autre n'étoit en état de l'entreprendre, il protesta qu'il ne pouvoit voir la Capitale du monde dans l'oppression, & prit les armes pour exterminer les Tirans.

CHAPITRE XXVII.

Constantin se resoud de n'adorer qu'un seul Dieu.

COMME il étoit persuadé qu'il avoit besoin d'une puissance plus considérable & plus invincible que celle des armées, pour dissiper les illusions de la magie, dans lesquelles Maxence mettoit sa principale confiance, il eut recours à la protection de Dieu. Il délibéra d'abord sur le choix de celui qu'il devoit reconnoître. Il considéra que la plûpart de ses prédécesseurs, qui avoient adoré plusieurs Dieux & qui leur avoient offert de l'encens & des sacrifices, avoient été trompez par des prédictions pleines de flaterie; & par des oracles, qui ne leur promettoient que d'heureux succez, & qu'ils étoient enfin péris misérablement; sans qu'aucun de leurs Dieux se fût mis en peine de

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les secourir. Que son pere avoit seul reconnu leur égarement, & seul pris le bon chemin, qu'il n'avoit adoré que Dieu durant toute sa vie, & que Dieu avoit été en récompense son protecteur, le conservateur de son Empire, & l'auteur de tous ses biens. Il fit une sérieuse réflexion sur la multitude des maux, dont avoient été accablez ceux qui avoient suivi une multitude de Dieux, & reconnut qu'aucun d'eux n'avoit laissé de postérité, ni même la moindre mémoire de son nom, au lieu que le Dieu de son pere lui avoit donné d'illustres preuves de sa puissance. Il remarqua aussi que ceux qui en prenant les armes contre les tirans avoient mis leur espérance dans la protection des Dieux n'en avoient tiré aucun avantage, l'un étant revenu avec ses troupes, sans avoir rien fait de considérable, & l'autre aiant été tué au milieu de son armée. Aprés avoir long-tems médité toutes ces raisons, il jugea que c'étoit la derniére de toutes les extravagances d'adorer des Idoles, de la foiblesse & du néant desquelles il avoit des preuves si convainquantes, & il se resolut d'adorer le Dieu de Constance son pere.

CHAPITRE XXVIII.

Vision de Constantin.

Constantin implora la protection de ce Dieu, le pria de se faire connoître à lui, & de l'assister dans l'état où se trouvoient ses affaires. Pendant qu'il faisoit cette priére, il eut une merveilleuse vision, & qui paroîtroit peut-être incroiable, si elle étoit rapportée par un autre. Mais personne ne doit faire difficulté de la croire, puisque ce Prince me l'a racontée lui-même long-tems depuis, lorsque j'ai eu l'honneur d'entrer dans ses

ses bonnes graces, & que l'évenement en a confirmé la vérité. Il assûroit qu'il avoit vû en plein midi une croix lumineuse avec cette inscription. VAINQUEZ A LA FAVEUR DE CE SIGNE, & qu'il fut extrémement étonné de ce spectacle, de même que ses soldats qui le suivoient.

CHAPITRE XXIX.

Songe de Constantin.

CETTE vision fit une si forte impression sur l'esprit de Constantin qu'il en étoit encore tout occupé la nuit suivante. Durant son sommeil le Sauveur lui apparut avec le même signe qu'il lui avoit montré en l'air durant le jour, & lui commanda de faire un Etendart de la même forme, & de le porter dans les combats pour se garantir du danger.

CHAPITRE XXX.

Constantin fait faire un Etendart en forme de croix.

CONSTANTIN s'étant levé dés la pointe du jour raconta à ses amis le songe qu'il avoit eu, & aiant envoié quérir des Orphévres, & des Lapidaires, il s'assit au milieu d'eux, leur proposa le dessein & la figure du signe qu'il avoit vû, & leur commanda d'en faire un semblable, enrichi d'or, & de pierreries.

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CHAPITRE XXXI.

Description de l'Etendart fait en forme de croix.

J'AI vû l'Etendart que les Orphévres firent par l'ordre de ce Prince, & il m'est aisé d'en décrire ici la figure. C'est comme une pique, couverte de lames d'or, qui a un travers en forme d'Antenne qui fait la croix. Il y a au haut de la pique une couronne enrichie d'or & de pierreries. Le nom de nôtre Sauveur est marqué sur cette couronne par les deux premiéres lettres; dont la seconde est un peu coupée. Les Empereurs ont porté depuis, ces deux mêmes lettres sur leur casque. Il y a un voile de pourpre attaché au bois qui traverse la pique. Ce voile est de figure quarrée, & couvert de perles, dont l'éclat donne de l'admiration. Comme la pique est fort haute elle a au bas du voile le portrait de l'Empereur & de ses enfans, fait en or jusques à demi-corps seulement. Constantin s'est toûjours couvert dans la guerre, de cét Etendart comme d'un rempart, & en a fait faire d'autres semblables pour les porter dans toutes ses armées.

CHAPITRE XXXII.

Constantin lit l'Ecriture sainte.

CONSTANTIN aiant l'esprit tout rempli de l'étonnement qu'une vision si extraordinaire lui avoit causé, jugea qu'il n'y avoit point d'autre Dieu qu'il dût reconnoître, que celui qui lui étoit apparu, & aiant envoié quérir ses Prêtres, & ses ministres, il leur demanda qui étoit ce Dieu, & ce

& ce que signifioit la figure si lumineuse & si éclatante qu'il lui avoit montrée. Les Prêtres lui répondirent que le Dieu qui lui étoit apparu étoit le Fils unique de Dieu, que la figure qui lui avoit été montrée, étoit la marque de l'immortalité, & le trophée de la victoire que le Fils de Dieu avoit remportée sur la mort. Ils lui déduisirent les raisons pour lesquelles il est décendu du Ciel en terre, & lui expliquérent le mystére de son Incarnation. L'Empereur les écouta avec une merveilleuse attention. Il compara leurs discours avec la vision qu'il avoit euë, & ne douta point qu'ils ne lui enseignassent la vérité par l'ordre de Dieu. Il s'appliqua ensuite à la lecture des livres sacrez, retint toûjours les Prêtres auprés de lui, & se resolut d'adorer le Dieu dont ils lui avoient découvert les mystéres. L'espérance qu'il avoit mise en sa protection, l'excita bien-tôt aprés à entreprendre d'éteindre l'embrasement qui avoit été allumé par la rage des Tirans.

CHAPITRE XXXIII.

Adultéres commis à Rome par Maxence.

Le Tiran qui s'étoit emparé de la ville Impériale étoit monté à cét excés d'impudence, & d'impiété que de se plonger publiquement dans les plus sales débauches. Il arrachoit les femmes d'entre les bras de leurs maris, & les leur renvoioit aprés les avoir violées. Il fit cét outrage aux personnes de la premiére qualité, & aux plus considérables du Sénat. Il joüit d'un grand nombre de femmes de condition, sans pouvoir rassasier son incontinence. Mais il ne pût jamais joüir d'aucune femme Chrétienne. Il n'y en eut point qui n'aimât mieux perdre la vie que l'honneur.

CHAPITRE XXXIV.

La femme d'un Préfet se procure la mort pour conserver sa pudicité.

LA femme d'un des principaux du Sénat, & qui avoit la dignité de Préfet, aiant appris que les Ministres des débauches de Maxence étoient à la porte de son logis, & que son mari avoit consenti qu'ils l'emmenassent, de peur d'être maltraitée, elle leur demanda un peu de tems pour se parer, & étant entrée dans son cabinet, s'enfonça un poignard dans le sein, & publia par une action si éclatante non seulement à tous les peuples de son siécle, mais aussi à tous les siécles à venir, qu'il n'y a que parmi les Chrétiens où l'on trouve une pudicité invincible, & exemte de la mort.

CHAPITRE XXXV.

Massacre du peuple de Rome.

LES grands & les petis, les Magistrats & le peuple étoient dans l'oppression, & redoutoient la violence avec laquelle le Tiran commettoit les crimes les plus horribles. La patience qu'ils conservoient au milieu des plus injustes traitemens ne les mettoit en aucune sûreté. Il commanda un jour, pour un fort léger sujet, aux soldats de sa Garde de faire main-basse sur le peuple, qui fut à l'heure-même massacré par les armes non des Scythes & des Barbares, mais de ses propres citoiens. Il n'est pas aisé de faire le dénombrement des Sénateurs qu'il condamna sur de fausses accusations, à dessein d'enlever leur bien.

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CHAPITRE XXXVI.

Maxence s'adonne à la magie.

Maxence couronna ſes autres crimes par les cruautez & les ſacriléges de la magie tantôt en ouvrant le ventre des enceintes, & des enfans nez depuis peu de jours, tantôt en égorgeant des lions, & en offrant d'abominables ſacrifices pour évoquer les démons, & détourner la guerre dont il étoit ménacé. Il eſpéroit obtenir la victoire par ces artifices. Il traitoit cependant ſes ſujets avec une dureté ſi extraordinaire, qu'ils ſouffrirent ſoûs ſon régne une diſette dont il n'y avoit point eû d'exemple dans les ſiécles précédens.

CHAPITRE XXXVII

Défaite de Maxence.

La compaſſion que Conſtantin eut de leur miſére lui mit les armes entre les mains contre celui qui en étoit l'auteur. Aiant imploré la protection de Dieu, & du Sauveur ſon Fils unique. Il fit marcher ſon armée ſoûs l'Etendart de la croix à deſſein de rétablir les Romains en poſſeſſion de leur ancienne liberté. Maxence mettant ſa confiance dans les illuſions de la magie plûtôt que dans l'affection de ſes ſujets, n'oſa ſortir de Rome. Mais il mit des garniſons dans toutes les Villes dont il avoit opprimé la liberté, & plaça des troupes en embuſcade ſur les paſſages. Conſtantin dont Dieu favoriſoit l'entrepriſe força aiſément toutes ces troupes, & entra juſques au cœur de l'Italie.

CHAPITRE XXXVIII.

Mort de Maxence.

DIEU qui ne vouloit pas que Constantin fût obligé de mettre le siége devant Rome pour se rendre Maître de Maxence, le lui amena hors des murailles avec des chaînes invisibles. Il fit voir la vérité du miracle, qui passe pour une fable dans l'esprit des incrédules, bien qu'il ne soit point revoqué en doute par les Fidéles, & qu'il avoit autrefois opéré contre les Egyptiens, en faveur des Juifs par un autre miracle, dont les Fidéles & les Infidéles furent également témoins. Maxence tomba au fond du Tibre avec les soldats & les gardes qui l'environnoient, comme Pharaon étoit autrefois tombé au fond de la mer avec ses chariots & son armée. Ce Tiran aiant été mis en fuite par les troupes de Constantin, qui étoit favorisé de la protection du ciel, il voulut passer un pont, où il avoit préparé une machine pour surprendre son ennemi. Nôtre Religieux Prince fut assisté par le Dieu qu'il adoroit, & l'impie périt dans le piége qu'il avoit dressé, si bien qu'on
Ps.57. lui peut appliquer ces paroles de l'Ecriture : *Il a ouvert une fosse, & l'a creusée, & il tombera lui-même dans la fosse qu'il a faite, son iniquité retournera contre lui, & ses violences retomberont sur sa tête.* La machine s'étant entr'ouverte au tems auquel on s'y attendoit le moins, les vaisseaux coulérent à fond. L'impie tomba le premier comme une masse de plomb avec les soldats qui l'environnoient. L'armée que Dieu avoit renduë victorieuse, pouvoit chanter alors les mê-

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mes Cantiques que les Israëlites avoient chantez autrefois contre Pharaon, & dire comme eux: *Publions les loüanges du Seigneur, dont la gloire a éclaté. Il a jetté dans la mer le cheval, & celui qui étoit monté dessus. Il a été mon aide, mon protecteur & mon salut. Qui est semblable à vous entre les Dieux, Seigneur, qui est semblable à vous? Vôtre gloire a paru dans vos saints. Elle a attiré l'admiration, & vous avez fait des prodiges.* Exod. ch. 15.

CHAPITRE XXXIX.

Entrée de Constantin dans Rome.

CONSTANTIN aiant à l'imitation de Moïse chanté ce Cantique, ou quelque autre semblable, en l'honneur de Dieu, qui avoit conduit son armée, & qui lui avoit accordé la victoire, entra en triomphe à Rome, où les Sénateurs, les Chevaliers, les Hommes, les Femmes, les Enfans & tout le peuple délivrez de la servitude, accoururent au devant de lui avec toute sorte de témoignages de joie, le salüérent comme leur libérateur, & leur conservateur, ne pouvant se lasser de faire des acclamations en son honneur. Mais sa piété ne lui permettant pas de s'enfler de ces loüanges, il rendit à Dieu la gloire que l'on lui offroit, & protesta que c'étoit de sa main qu'il tenoit la victoire, & que Rome avoit reçu sa liberté.

CHAPITRE XL.

Statuë de Constantin.

Ce grand Prince procura en quelque sorte le salut de tous les hommes, en élevant au milieu de Rome la Croix qui en est le signe, & en gravant une inscription qui en explique la puissance. Il fit mettre dans la main de sa Statuë érigée au plus bel endroit de la Ville, une Croix avec cette inscription en langue Latine. PAR CE SIGNE SALUTAIRE, QUI EST LA MARQUE DE LA VERITABLE PUISSANCE, J'AI DELIVRÉ VÔTRE VILLE DE LA DOMINATION DES TIRANS, ET J'AI RETABLI LE SENAT ET LE PEUPLE DANS LEUR ANCIENNE SPLENDEUR.

CHAPITRE XLI.

Réjoüissances publiques. Largesses de Constantin.

Voila comment ce Religieux Empereur mettoit sa gloire dans la confession de la Croix, & annonçoit aux peuples le Fils de Dieu. Les habitans de Rome commençoient à respirer, aprés avoir été si long-tems accablez soûs le joug de la tirannie, & s'imaginoient joüir d'un air plus pur que jamais, & comme d'une vie toute nouvelle. Les nations qui habitent vers l'Océan, étant délivrées de leurs maux, ne songeoient qu'à faire des réjoüissances publiques, & à publier tout d'une voix que Constantin étoit un present du ciel, un Prince chéri de Dieu, & accordé à l'Empire pour le rendre florissant. On vit ses édits affichez aux coins de toutes les ruës, par lesquels il rappe-

rappeloit les exilez, délivroit les prisonniers, & rendoit le bien à ceux qui en avoient été injustement dépoüillez.

CHAPITRE XLII.

Honneurs déférez aux Evêques. Eglises rétablies.

L'Empereur envoia quérir les Ministres consacrez au service de Dieu, leur rendit de grands honneurs, les fit asseoir à sa table, bien qu'ils semblassent n'avoir rien que de vil & de méprisable dans leurs habits & dans leur mine. Mais au lieu de regarder l'extérieur, il regardoit en eux la Majesté souveraine, au culte de laquelle ils étoient attachez par leur ministére. Il les menoit par tout avec lui, & étoit persuadé qu'ils attireroient sur lui les bénédictions de Dieu. Il emploia des sommes considérables, soit pour aggrandir des Eglises, ou pour les embellir & les parer.

CHAPITRE XLIII.

Charité de Constantin envers les pauvres.

Il exerça sa libéralité envers plusieurs personnes à proportion de leurs besoins. Il reçut avec beaucoup de civilité les étrangers, & leur fit de grands presens. Il ne se contenta pas de distribuer de l'argent aux pauvres qui mandient dans les ruës & dans les places publiques, il prit le soin de leur nourriture, & de leur vêtement. Il usa de magnificence envers ceux qui étant d'une honnête naissance, étoient tombez par malheur dans la pauvreté, donnant aux uns des terres pour leur subsistance, & aux autres des emplois. Il pourvût

avec une bonté paternelle aux nécessitez des Orphelins, & prit en sa protection les Veuves qui n'avoient nul appui. Il maria à des hommes riches, les filles qui n'avoient point de parens, & leur donna auparavant de grands biens pour porter dans la communauté. Enfin il répandit ses bien-faits sur tous ses sujets, avec la même profusion que le Soleil répand sa lumiére sur tous les hommes. Jamais personne n'a imploré en vain son secours dans son besoin, & jamais personne ne s'est retiré de devant lui, sans en avoir reçu quelque grace.

CHAPITRE XLIV.

Constantin assiste aux assemblées des Evêques.

Que si l'Empereur dont je parle, avoit une inclination si bienfaisante pour tous ses sujets, il prenoit un soin particulier des Chrétiens. Il convoqua comme un commun Evêque ordonné de Dieu des Conciles pour appaiser les différens qui s'étoient émus en diverses Provinces entre les Pasteurs de l'Eglise. Il prit la peine d'assister à leurs assemblées, de s'asseoir au milieu d'eux, d'examiner le sujet de leurs contestations, & de s'entremettre de les accorder. Il commandoit alors à ses Gardes de se retirer, & se tenoit assez bien gardé par la crainte de Dieu, & par l'affection de ses sujets. Il loüoit la sagesse & la modération de ceux qui suivoient le bon parti, & qui se portoient à la paix, & blâmoit l'opiniâtreté de ceux qui refusoient de se rendre à la raison.

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CHAPITRE XLV.

Constantin souffre avec une grande modération l'indiscrétion de quelques-uns.

CONSTANTIN souffrit avec une extréme modération la chaleur indiscrette de quelques Evêques qui s'emportérent contre lui, les exhorta par de douces paroles à entretenir la paix, & à ne point exciter de tumulte. Quelques-uns déférérent à ses remontrances. D'autres les méprisérent, & au lieu d'user d'aucune rigueur contre eux, il laissa à Dieu le soin de les corriger. Les séditieux d'Afrique s'étant portez à une entreprise fort insolente, ou plûtôt y aiant été poussez par le démon qui ne pouvoit voir sans dépit, la prospérité de l'Eglise, l'Empereur s'en moqua, au lieu de s'en fâcher, & témoigna qu'il reconnoissoit fort bien que c'étoit un artifice du mauvais esprit; que pour faire de ces sortes d'entreprises, il faloit ou avoir perdu le sens, ou étre possédé par le démon, & que ceux qui étoient en cét état, étoient plus dignes de compassion, que de châtiment.

CHAPITRE XLVI.

Victoires remportées sur les étrangers.

NÔTRE Empereur s'étant consacré de la sorte, au service de Dieu, pourvoioit avec une vigilance infatigable aux nécessitez de l'Eglise. Dieu réduisit en récompense les étrangers sous ses piez, & le rendit formidable à ses ennemis, bien que de son naturel, il fût le plus doux de tous les hommes.

CHAPITRE XLVII.

Mort de Maximien.

Un des deux Princes, qui avoient renoncé à la souveraine puissance, aiant formé une conjuration contre Constantin, il mourut d'un genre de mort tres-infame. Ce fut le premier de qui l'on abbatit les statuës, en haine de ses crimes, & de qui l'on abolit tous les autres monumens. On découvrit bien-tôt aprés une autre conjuration formée par des parens-même de l'Empereur, & c'étoit Dieu qui la lui avoit révélée. Il avoit la bonté de se montrer à lui, & de l'avertir de ce qui lui devoit arriver. Les graces qu'il fit à ce religieux Prince, sont si merveilleuses, que je n'ai point de paroles qui les puissent exprimer. Il le preserva de toute sorte de dangers, durant tout le cours de sa vie, lui donna des sujets affectionnez & fidéles, fit régner la paix dans son Roiaume, & fleurir la piété dans l'Eglise pendant son régne.

CHAPITRE XLVIII.

Jeux célébrez en la dixiéme année du régne de Constantin.

La dixiéme année du régne de Constantin s'étant cependant écoulée, on fit des réjoüissances publiques dans tous les Païs de son obéïssance, & on rendit à Dieu des actions de graces, qui étoient comme des sacrifices tres-purs, & où il n'y avoit ni feu, ni fumée. L'Empereur en eut beaucoup de joie. Mais il eut aussi beaucoup de douleur des nouvelles qui arrivérent d'Orient.

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CHAPITRE XLIX.

Mauvais état des affaires d'Orient.

LICINIUS persécutoit les Fidéles, & tourmentoit ses autres sujets avec une cruauté farouche, & sembloit être excité par le démon, à faire dans le Païs qui relevoit de lui, tout le contraire de ce que Constantin faisoit dans le sien. L'Empire étoit divisé en deux parties, dont l'une ressembloit au jour, & l'autre à la nuit. L'Orient étoit couvert d'épaisses ténébres, au lieu que l'Occident étoit éclairé d'une agréable lumiére. Le démon ne pût voir sans jalousie, l'éclat de cette lumiére, & Licinius qui tenoit ses sujets accablez soûs le joug de son injuste domination, ne pût souffrir la prospérité, dont joüissoient ceux de Constantin. Au lieu de suivre l'exemple de ce religieux Prince, dont il avoit l'honneur d'être allié, il suivit celui des impies, dont il avoit vû la mort funeste.

CHAPITRE L.

Piége dressé par Licinius à Constantin.

IL déclara la guerre à son bien-faiteur, sans respecter ni l'amitié, ni l'alliance, ni les contracts, ni les sermens. Le plus doux & le plus aimable de tous les Princes, lui avoit donné des marques certaines de l'affection la plus sincére, en lui accordant sa sœur en mariage, & en lui communiquant l'autorité souveraine. Mais l'impie n'aiant que de l'ingratitude pour ses bien-faits, lui dressa des piéges. Il tâcha de les cacher. Mais Dieu les fit

reconnoître. Les premiéres ruses de Licinius aiant été découvertes, il eut recours à d'autres, fit de nouvelles protestations d'amitié & de nouveaux sermens, puis les viola à l'heure-même. Il envoia ses Ambassadeurs, pour demander pardon de sa perfidie, & y retomba comme auparavant. Enfin il déclara la guerre, & prit les armes contre Dieu, au culte duquel il savoit que Constantin étoit tres-attaché.

CHAPITRE LI.

Licinius défend aux Evêques de s'assembler.

LICINIUS chercha de vains prétextes pour tourmenter de pieux Ecclésiastiques qui n'avoient jamais rien fait contre son service. Ne les pouvant accuser d'aucun crime, il s'avisa de défendre aux Evêques de s'assembler, & de faire des conférences. Il est clair qu'il ne cherchoit en cela que l'occasion de nous persécuter. Car si les Evêques violoient cét Edit, ils s'exposoient à étre punis. S'ils le gardoient, ils ruinoient la discipline de l'Eglise, dont les affaires ne peuvent étre traitées que dans les Conciles. L'impie gardoit en ce point une conduite toute contraire à celle de nôtre pieux Prince. Celui-ci convoquoit les Evêques pour entretenir la paix dans l'Eglise, au lieu que l'autre leur defendoit de s'assembler, pour accroître le trouble & le desordre.

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CHAPITRE LII.

Banniſſement des Chrétiens.

Au lieu que le religieux Empereur voioit volontiers les Chrétiens à ſa Cour, l'impie les chaſſa de la ſienne, bannit les plus fidéles & les plus affectionnez de ſes ſujets, & réduiſit à la ſervitude ceux qu'il avoit autrefois élevez aux premiéres dignitez, en récompenſe de leurs ſervices. Il enleva le bien de ceux qu'il avoit proſcrits; & ménaça de punir de mort tous ceux qui feroient profeſſion de nôtre Religion. Etant d'un naturel prodigieuſement adonné aux plus infames débauches, il jugeoit de tous les autres par ſoi-même, & ſoûtenoit qu'il n'étoit pas poſſible de garder la continence.

CHAPITRE LIII.

Autres Edits de Licinius.

Ce fut par ce motif qu'il fit un autre Edit, par lequel il défendit aux hommes de s'aſſembler dans l'Egliſe au même tems que les femmes, aux femmes d'entrer dans les lieux, où l'on enſeignoit les maximes de la piété Chrétienne, & aux Evêques de ſe charger de l'inſtruction des femmes, & ordonna qu'elles ſeroient inſtruites par d'autres femmes. Bien que tout le monde ſe moquât de cét Edit, il en inventa un autre ſemblable, pour diſſiper nos aſſemblées, & ordonna qu'elles ſe feroient à l'avenir hors la Ville, & en pleine campagne, ſoûs prétexte qu'un air libre comme celui-là eſt plus propre à une grande multitude, qu'un air renfermé entre les murailles d'un Oratoire.

CHAPITRE LIV.

Licinius ôte les charges à ceux qui refusent de sacrifier, & défend de porter des alimens aux prisonniers.

QUAND le Tiran vit que cette défense étoit méprisée, il leva le masque, & ordonna que les soldats qui servoient sous les Gouverneurs de Province, seroient licenciez, au cas qu'ils refusassent de sacrifier aux Idoles. Il priva par ce moien les Chrétiens de leurs emplois, & se priva au même tems du fruit de leurs priéres. Que dirai-je de la dureté qu'il eut de défendre que l'on n'assistât des misérables qui mouroient de faim dans les prisons? On ne sauroit jamais s'imaginer de cruauté si barbare que celle de cette défense. La peine proposée à ceux qui auroient eu pitié des prisonniers, fut d'être enfermés avec eux & de souffrir les mêmes incommoditez, & les mêmes miséres.

CHAPITRE LV.

Loix touchant les mariages & les testamens. Edits pour faire de nouvelles impositions.

EST-IL nécessaire de parler des nouvelles loix que ce Tiran fit touchant les mariages, & touchant les dernieres volontez des mourans? Il abrogea les anciennes, qui avoient été si sagement établies par les Romains, & en introduisit de barbares, qui ne tendoient qu'à la ruine de ses sujets. Il inventa une maniére extraordinaire de mesurer les terres, à dessein d'augmenter les impôts. Il fit mettre dans les Régîtres des recêtes, les noms des païsans, qui étoient morts. Il brûloit d'une ava-

avarice si insatiable, qu'aprés avoir amassé des trésors immenses, il se plaignoit de sa pauvreté, & sentoit un tourment égal à celui de Tantale. Qu'est-il besoin de faire ici le dénombrement des innocens qu'il a envoiez en exil, ou dont il a enlevé le bien, & des hommes de qualité qu'il a enfermez en d'obscures prisons, & dont il a prostitué les femmes à l'incontinence de ses esclaves? On détesteroit sans doute l'horrible brutalité, par laquelle, bien qu'il fût dans un âge presque décrépite, il tâcha de violer des femmes mariées, & des filles, s'il n'avoit commis d'autres crimes, en comparaison desquels ceux-ci peuvent paroître médiocres.

CHAPITRE LVI.

Persécution excitée par Licinius.

Il se porta à cét excez de fureur de prendre les armes contre l'Eglise, & d'attaquer les Evêques qu'il regardoit comme ses plus irréconciliables ennemis, par la seule raison qu'ils étoient intimes amis de Constantin. Il ne profita point de l'exemple de ceux qui avoient persécuté avant lui les Chrétiens, & sur tout de celui qui avoit été le premier & le principal auteur des injustices & des violences, bien qu'il eût été témoin de son châtiment & qu'il en eût été même, comme par un ordre secret de Dieu, un des Ministres.

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CHAPITRE LVII.

Maximien étant rongé d'un ulcére, publie une loi en faveur des Chrétiens.

C'EST de Maximien que je parle, qui s'étant le premier soüillé par le meurtre des serviteurs de Dieu, en fut puni d'un châtiment qui passa de son corps jusques à son ame. Un ulcére lui rongea les parties les plus internes, & produisit une quantité prodigieuse de vers, qui rendoient une odeur insupportable. On dit qu'étant devenu extraordinairement gros, pour avoir mangé avec trop d'excez, sa graisse se changea alors en une pourriture, que l'on ne pouvoit voir sans horreur. La rigueur de ce châtiment lui fit reconnoître l'énormité des crimes, qu'il avoit commis contre les Fidéles. Il en demanda pardon à Dieu, arrêta le cours de la persécution, permit de rebâtir les Eglises, & aux Chrétiens d'y faire les exercices ordinaires de leur Religion.

CHAPITRE LVIII.

Maximin s'enfuit déguisé en esclave.

LICINIUS oublia tout d'un coup ce terrible châtiment, que la justice divine avoit tiré de Maximien, bien qu'il en eût été mieux informé que personne, puisqu'il en avoit été témoin. Il oublia de la même sorte le châtiment de Maximin, qui aiant voulu enchérir sur la méchanceté de celui dont je viens de parler, inventa de nouveaux genres de supplices, pour tourmenter les Fidéles. Le feu, ni le fer, les dens des bêtes, les plus

plus cruelles, les abîmes les plus profons, ne suffisant pas pour contenter son inhumanité, il ordonna par un Edit que nous serions privez de la lumiére, & incontinent aprés on créva l'œil droit à un nombre presqu'innombrable d'hommes, de femmes & d'enfans, on les estropia d'une jambe, en leur coupant le nerf du pié, soit par le fer, ou par le feu, & on les envoia aux métaux, pour consumer par le travail le reste de leurs forces, & de leur vie. Il reçut bientot aprés la punition qu'il méritoit. Aiant fondé son espérance sur la multitude de ses soldats, & sur la puissance des démons qu'il adoroit comme des Dieux, il donna bataille. Mais étant abandonné du secours de Dieu, il fut obligé de se dépoüiller des habits Impériaux, dont il étoit indigne, de se couvrir d'un habit d'esclave, de se mêler dans la foule, & de tâcher d'assurer son salut par la fuite. Mais il ne pût se cacher à l'œil de la providence, qui veille sur toutes les créatures. Car au moment qu'il se tenoit en sureté, il fut percé d'un trait de feu & consumé de telle sorte, qu'il ne lui restoit plus rien de son ancienne figure, & qu'il n'avoit plus que des os desséchez.

CHAPITRE LIX.

[illegible]ximin perd la vûë, & fait une loi en faveur des Chrétiens.

La justice divine s'étant déchargée sur lui avec une rigueur encore plus grande, les yeux lui sortirent hors de la tête, & le laissérent dans un aussi triste aveuglement que celui, où il avoit mis plusieurs Martyrs. Il confessa néanmoins, avant que de mourir, la faute qu'il avoit faite, quand il avoit pris les armes contre Dieu, & lui en deman-

demanda pardon. Il fit une rétractation aussi publique, & aussi solennelle que celle de Maximien, dont j'ai parlé, déclara qu'il s'étoit trompé, en adorant des démons qu'il avoit pris pour des Dieux, & reconnut qu'il n'y en avoit point d'autre que celui des Chrétiens. Bien que Licinius sût parfaitement toutes ces choses, non pour les avoir apprises par le rapport d'autrui, mais pour les avoir vûës de ses propres yeux, il ne laissa pas de tomber dans les mêmes crimes, comme s'il eût eu l'esprit couvert d'épaisses ténébres.



LA VIE



LA VIE DE L'EMPEREUR CONSTANTIN,

Écrite par Eusébe Evêque de Césarée.

LIVRE SECOND.

CHAPITRE PREMIER.

Calomnieuses accusations des Evêques.

LICINIUS tomba de la sorte dans l'abîme de l'impiété, & suivant l'exemple de ceux, dont il avoit vû le châtiment, il r'alluma le feu de la persécution, qui étoit presqu'éteint, & excita un plus terrible embrasement que jamais. L'apprehension de la puissance de Constantin l'aiant empêché de prendre ouvertement les armes contre les Eglises établies dans la portion de son Empire, il cacha comme un serpent le venin de sa haine, & usant de ruses, fit mourir les meilleurs Evêques sur

ſur de fauſſes accuſations par le miniſtére des Gouverneurs. Le genre de leur mort fut fort nouveau, & il avoit été inconnu juſques alors. Les cruautez qui furent exercées dans la Ville d'Amaſée, vont au de-là de l'imagination.

CHAPITRE II.

Renverſement des Egliſes. Maſſacre des Evêques.

QUELQUES Egliſes de cette Ville, furent raſées, & les autres furent fermées par les Gouverneurs des Provinces, de ſorte que perſonne ne pouvoit plus y entrer, ni y faire les exercices ordinaires de nôtre Religion. La connoiſſance que celui qui donnoit cét ordre injuſte, avoit de ſes propres crimes, lui perſuadoit que l'on ne prioit point Dieu pour lui dans ces ſaints lieux, mais ſeulement pour Conſtantin. Les Gouverneurs de Province, qui ne ſongeoient qu'à flater l'injuſtice, & la cruauté de leur maître, firent exécuter à mort les Evêques les plus célébres par la pureté de leurs mœurs, & par l'éminence de leur ſainteté. Ces hommes qui n'avoient jamais fait de mal, étoient traitez comme des homicides. Quelques-uns furent hachez en piéces, & jettez, dans la mer pour ſervir de pâture aux poiſſons. La violence de la perſécution obligea les ſerviteurs de Dieu, à ſe retirer dans les ſolitudes les plus afreuſes. Le Tiran avoit deſſein de leur déclarer à tous la guerre,& rien ne l'en auroit empêché, ſi Dieu n'avoit pris la protection de ſes ſaints, & n'avoit ſuſcité Conſtantin, pour diſſiper, comme une éclatante lumiére, l'obſcurité qui menaçoit l'Egliſe d'un terrible orage.

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CHAPITRE III.

Constantin entreprend la protection des Chrétiens.

Ce grand Prince n'eut pas si-tôt reçu la nouvelle des rigoureux traitemens, que Licinius faisoit aux Fidéles, que mêlant en quelque sorte la force de son courage à la douceur de son naturel, il se resolut de les venger. Il jugea qu'il y auroit de la piété à assurer le repos des peuples par la mort d'un seul homme, qui étant indigne de compassion, abuseroit de sa clémence, & se porteroit à de plus horribles excez que jamais, sans que les innocens, qu'il opprimeroit, y pussent trouver aucun remede. Dés qu'il eut pris cette resolution, il leva des troupes, & amassa des armes. Lorsque l'Infanterie & la Cavalerie furent assemblées, on vit paroître devant elles l'Etendart que j'ai décrit dans le livre précédent, & qui étoit la marque de la confiance qu'elles avoient en Dieu.

CHAPITRE IV.

Constantin se prépare à la guerre, en faisant des priéres, & Licinius en consultant les devins

Constantin jugeant qu'il avoit plus grand besoin que jamais du secours des saints Prêtres, les retint auprés de lui, comme les Gardes les plus seurs & les plus fidéles. Quand le Tiran sut que Constantin n'attendoit la victoire que du ciel, qu'il étoit environné d'une troupe de ministres de l'Eglise, & que l'on portoit devant son

son armée le signe de nôtre Rédemption, il s'en moqua comme d'une foiblesse d'esprit, & en fit des railleries également insolentes & impies. Pour lui, il eut recours aux devins d'Egypte, aux imposteurs, aux empoisonneurs, aux Prêtres & aux Prophétes de ses Idoles. Il offrit des sacrifices aux Dieux qu'il adoroit, & les consulta sur l'évenement de la guerre. Les réponses des Oracles furent toutes conformes. Elles furent toutes conçuës en des vers fort élégans, & promirent toutes la victoire au Tiran. Les Interprétes des songes, les Aruspices, qui examinent les entrailles des victimes, lui confirmérent la même promesse, & le remplirent d'espérance. Il se mit dans cette disposition d'esprit, à la tête de ses troupes, & se prépara au combat.

CHAPITRE V.

Discours fait par Licinius avant la bataille.

Avant que de donner la bataille, il assembla les principaux Officiers de son armée dans un bois sombre, arrosé de belles eaux, & rempli des statues de ceux qu'il prenoit pour des Dieux. On dit qu'aprés avoir allumé des cierges, & avoir offert des sacrifices, il y fit ce discours. „ Mes amis, & mes compagnons, nous adorons „ les Dieux que nos ancêtres ont adorez de tout „ tems. Celui qui commande l'armée ennemie, „ a renoncé aux coûtumes de nos Peres, pour sui- „ vre l'opinion impie de ceux qui ne reconnoissent „ point les Dieux, & pour introduire un certain „ Dieu étranger, dans lequel il met sa confiance, „ non tant contre nous, que contre nos Dieux, „ & par l'Etendart duquel il deshonore ses troupes.

„ Cette

„ Cette journée décidera de la Religion des deux „ partis, & de la vérité des Dieux. Si nous rem„ portons la victoire, il sera clair que ceux que „ nous adorons, auront eu le pouvoir de nous „ protéger & de nous défendre. Que si ce „ Dieu, dont on ne sait point l'origine, & „ qu'il semble que nous méprisons avec raison, „ est plus puissant que tous les nôtres, il faudra „ les abandonner & ne reconnoître que lui. Mais „ si nous demeurons victorieux, comme je me „ le promets, il faudra tourner nos armes contre „ ceux qui les méprisent. Voila le discours de Licinius, tel que je l'ai appris par le rapport de quelques personnes qui l'avoient oüi de sa bouche. Il commanda incontinent aprés aux soldats de se tenir prêts pour donner bataille.

CHAPITRE VI.

Présage de la défaite de Licinius.

On dit que l'on remarqua en ce tems-là un étrange prodige dans les Villes qui relevoient de l'obéïssance de Licinius. On y vit en plein midi des troupes de Constantin, qui passoient avec toutes les marques de joie que l'on a accoûtumé de donner quand on a remporté la victoire. Cependant il n'y avoit aucunes troupes dans ces Villes. Mais Dieu par un effet merveilleux de sa toute-puissance, representoit ce qui devoit arriver. Lorsque les deux armées furent en presence, celui qui avoit rompu la paix & les traitez, commença le combat. Mais Constantin aiant imploré le secours de Dieu, & montré à ses soldats l'Etendart de la croix, le repoussa. Il en vint une seconde fois aux mains avec ses ennemis, & eut

& eut un avantage encore plus notable qu'à la premiére.

CHAPITRE VII.

Puissance merveilleuse de la Croix, pour vaincre les ennemis.

En tous les endroits, où l'Etendart de la croix paroissoit, les ennemis prenoient la fuite. Constantin s'en étant apperçu, le fit porter à la tête des troupes qui commençoient à plier, & à lâcher le pié, & à l'heure-même, elles reprirent courage, & se sentirent animées d'une ardeur toute divine.

CHAPITRE VIII.

Constantin choisit cinquante hommes pour porter tour à tour l'Etendart de la croix.

Constantin aiant choisi parmi ses Gardes environ cinquante de ceux qui surpassoient les autres en force de corps, en grandeur de courage, & en piété, il les chargea de garder continuellement l'Etendart, & de le porter tour à tour. Il m'a raconté lui-même ce fait important, long-tems depuis, aux heures de son loisir, & m'en a remarqué une circonstance qui mérite d'être consacrée à la postérité.

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CHAPITRE IX.

Circonſtance remarquable.

Le deſordre s'étant mis dans l'armée, au milieu de la chaleur du combat, celui qui portoit l'Etendart, eut peur, & le donna à un autre pour éviter le péril. Mais il n'en fut pas ſi-tôt déchargé, qu'il reçut un trait dans le ventre, dont il tomba mort ſur le champ, en punition de ſa lâcheté & de ſon infidélité. Celui qui s'étoit chargé de l'Etendart en ſa place, en fut protégé. Quelque quantité de traits que jettaſſent les ennemis, aucun ne tomba ſur lui. C'étoit une choſe merveilleuſe à voir, que tous les traits des ennemis demeuroient dans le bois de la Croix, quoiqu'il fût fort étroit, & qu'aucun ne toucha jamais ceux qui portérent ce ſigne de nôtre redemption. Cette circonſtance-là n'eſt point de moi, elle eſt de l'Empereur, de la bouche duquel je l'ai appriſe. Aprés que par un effet viſible de la Puiſſance divine, il eut gagné les deux batailles, dont je viens de parler, il rangea ſon armée en bon ordre, & la mena plus avant.

CHAPITRE X.

Petis combats.

Les Chefs de l'armée ennemie n'aiant pû ſoûtenir le premier choc des troupes victorieuſes, mirent bas les armes, & ſe jettérent aux piés de Conſtantin. Il fut ravi de joie d'avoir cette occaſion d'uſer de clémence, & de leur ſauver la vie.

Il exhorta les autres à ſuivre l'exemple de leurs compagnons. Mais quand il vit qu'ils demeuroient ſoûs les armes, & qu'ils étoient reſolus de ſe défendre, il commanda de les charger. Ils prirent à l'heure-même la fuite. Les uns aiant été pourſuivis furent taillez en piéces. Les autres périrent par les armes de leurs compagnons dans le deſordre de leur retraite.

CHAPITRE XI.

Fuite honteuſe de Licinius.

Le Chef de leur parti prit honteuſement la fuite, quand il ſe vit abandonué de ſes ſoldats & de ſes alliez, & fruſtré de l'eſpérance qu'il avoit miſe dans le ſecours de ſes Dieux. L'Empereur ne voulut pas que l'on le pourſuivît, parce qu'il eſpéroit que le mauvais ſuccez de ſes entrepriſes, le rendroit plus ſage & plus modéré. Il aimoit mieux lui donner la vie, bien qu'il en fût tres-indigne, & ſouffrir les injures qu'il avoit reçuës de lui, que de s'en venger. Mais Licinius, bien loin de ſe corriger, eut recours aux ſecrets abominables de la magie, & s'enfla d'un orguëil plus inſupportable que jamais. On pouvoit dire de lui, ce que l'on avoit dit auparavant de Pharaon, que Dieu lui avoit endurci le cœur.

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CHAPITRE XII.

Constantin obtient la victoire par ses priéres.

LICINIUS s'étant lié des liens de ses crimes, se précipita dans l'abîme d'une perte irréparable. Constantin au contraire jugeant qu'il ne pouvoit terminer la guerre, sans donner encore une bataille, il s'adonna avec plus d'ardeur & de zele que jamais au service de son Sauveur. Il fit dresser hors du camp, un tabernacle, pour placer la Croix, & il s'y retiroit souvent, pour y faire de devotes oraisons, *à l'imitation du Prophéte, qui selon le témoignage de l'Ecriture, mit le Tabernacle hors du camp des Israëlites. Il étoit accompagné dans ces pieux exercices d'un petit nombre de personnes d'une fidélité reconnuë, & d'une vertu éprouvée. Il n'y manquoit jamais, quand il étoit sur le point de donner bataille. Car outre qu'il agissoit toûjours avec une maturité pleine de sagesse, il consultoit Dieu dans toutes ses entreprises. Dieu ne dédaignoit pas aussi de lui répondre tres-sensiblement, & de lui prescrire ce qu'il devoit faire. Alors il sortoit du Tabernacle tout rempli de l'esprit divin, commandoit de sonner de la trompette, & de marcher contre l'ennemi. Ses soldats fondoient à l'heure-même, faisoient main-basse, & remportoient la victoire.



CHAPITRE XIII.

Clémence de Constantin envers les vaincus.

VOILA de quelle maniére l'Empereur Constantin avoit accoûtumé depuis long-tems, de se préparer au combat, & d'y animer son armée. Il vouloit dépendre si absolument de la volonté de Dieu, qu'en toutes occasions il la préféroit à sa propre vie. Il faisoit consience de répandre beaucoup de sang, & épargnoit celui de ses ennemis, aussi bien que celui de ses soldats. Il exhortoit les vainqueurs à pardonner aux vaincus. Que s'il reconnoissoit que les gens de guerre n'étoient plus maîtres de leur courage, il tâchoit de les modérer en leur donnant une certaine somme d'argent pour chaque homme, auquel ils auroient sauvé la vie. Sa libéralité conserva de la sorte, un grand nombre de Romains & d'étrangers.

CHAPITRE XIV.

Assiduité des priéres de Constantin.

L'EMPEREUR pratiquoit ordinairement ces exercices de piété & d'autres semblables. Mais au tems dont je parle, & avant que de donner le combat, il s'enferma dans le Tabernacle, & y fit d'humbles priéres à Dieu, se priva cependant de toutes sortes de divertissemens, se mortifia par des jeûnes, & par d'autres austéritez, & enfin demanda à Dieu la grace d'accomplir les desseins qu'il lui avoit inspirez. Il pourvoioit incessamment aux besoins de

de son Etat, & ne songeoit pas moins à conserver les ennemis que ses propres soldats.

CHAPTRE XV.

Mauvaise foi de Licinius

LICINIUS aiant demandé la paix depuis la fuite honteuse, dont nous avons parlé, Constantin qui la tenoit utile à l'Empire, consentit de la lui accorder à certaines conditions. Licinius feignit de les accepter de bonne foi, & s'obligea avec serment à y satisfaire. Mais il ne laissa pas de faire secrétement des levées, & de se préparer à reprendre les armes. Il se fortifioit chaque jour par de nouvelles alliances, & recherchoit d'autres Dieux que ceux qui l'avoient trompé, sans se souvenir de ce qu'il avoit dit, peu auparavant, que si le Dieu de Constantin remportoit la victoire, il faudroit renoncer aux autres pour l'adorer.

CHAPITRE XVI.

Licinius défend d'attaquer l'Etendart de la croix.

LICINIUS aiant reconnu par une expérience funeste la puissance invincible du signe salutaire de la rédemption humaine, défendit à ses soldats de s'approcher, & même de jetter les yeux du côté où il seroit, & se resolut d'attaquer Constantin, qui avoit la bonté de différer de combattre, de peur de perdre son ennemi. L'armée de Licinius mettoit sa confiance dans son nombre, & dans celui de ses Dieux, & portoit en forme d'Etendart certaines statuës, desquelles elle attendoit quelque sorte de secours. Constantin se

 couvrit

couvrit de la cuirasse de la foi, & fit porter devant lui l'Etendart de la croix, qui donnoit de la terreur à ses ennemis, & de l'assurance à ses soldats. Il fit difficulté de commencer le combat, pour ne pas rompre le traité qu'il avoit signé.

CHAPITRE XVII.

Victoire remportée par Constantin.

Mais quand il vit que les ennemis étoient resolus à combattre, & qu'ils préparoient leurs armes pour cét effet, il conçut de l'indignation, fondit sur eux avec un grand cri, & sans avoir tiré presqu'aucun trait, le mit en déroute & leurs troupes & celles des démons qui les soûtenoient.

CHAPITRE XVIII.

Mort de Licinius.

Constantin condamna selon la rigueur de la guerre, l'ennemi de Dieu, & les principaux de son parti; & sur tout ceux qui lui avoient conseillé d'attaquer la piété, furent exécutez avec lui. D'autres qui avoient mis un peu auparavant leur espérance en de faux Dieux, confessérent qu'il n'y avoit que celui de Constantin qui fût véritable.

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CHAPITRE XIX.

Réjoüissances publiques.

Les impies aiant été de la sorte enlevez du monde, & les nuages de la tirannie dissipez, on vit luire les raions d'une légitime domination, & d'une honnête liberté. Les parties de l'Empire, qui avoient été autrefois séparées, se rejoignirent, & les Provinces d'Orient & d'Occident se réünirent soûs un même Prince, comme les membres du même corps soûs le même chef. Ceux qui étoient autrefois assis dans les ténébres, & dans l'ombre de la mort, regardérent le jour avec joïe, oubliérent leurs maux, publiérent les victoires de Constantin, & reconnurent la puissance du Sauveur, qui les lui avoit accordées. Ce Prince victorieux rentra en possession de l'Orient, & remit l'Empire entier soûs sa puissance. Il joüit seul de la Monarchie Romaine, comme il avoit publié seul entre tous les Empereurs, celle que Dieu posséde dans tout l'univers, & dans tous les siécles. La tristesse & la crainte furent bannies par la joïe & par l'assurance. Les peuples témoignérent leur satisfaction par les actions de graces qu'ils rendirent à Dieu, par les acclamations qu'ils firent en l'honneur du vainqueur, & par les loüanges qu'ils donnérent aux Princes ses enfans. La joüissance des biens presens, & l'espérance des biens à venir, effaça le souvenir des maux passez.

CHAPITRE XX.

Loix publiées par Constantin en faveur des Confesseurs.

On publia alors dans la partie de l'Empire que nous habitons, des loix fort douces & fort favorables, comme on en avoit publié dés auparavant dans l'autre partie. Ces loix ne respiroient que la piété, le repos des peuples, & l'honneur de l'Eglise. Elles rappellérent ceux qui avoient été bannis par les Gouverneurs de Province, pour n'avoir pas voulu sacrifier aux Idoles. Elles rétablirent en possession de leurs biens ceux qui en avoient été privez. Elles licenciérent ceux, qui pour le même sujet, avoient été condamnez à rendre quelque service à la Cour. Elles remirent en liberté ceux qui avoient été réléguez dans des Isles, & ceux qui avoient été envoiez aux métaux, ou emploiez à d'autres ouvrages publics. Elles laissérent au choix de ceux, qui en haine de la fermeté avec laquelle ils avoient fait profession de la Religion Chrétienne, avoient été interdits de leurs charges, ou d'en faire les fonctions comme auparavant, ou de vivre en repos. Enfin elles delivrérent les hommes qui avoient été condamnez à cette peine honteuse de travailler aux ouvrages des femmes.

CHAPITRE XXI.

Loix faites en faveur des Martyrs, & des Eglises.

APRE'S que l'Empereur eut pourvû de cette sorte au rétablissement des Confesseurs & des Martyrs, il prit le soin de la conservation de leurs biens. Il ordonna que les proches de ceux qui avoient souffert la mort pour la defense de la foi, joüiroient de leur succession, & que s'ils n'avoient point d'heritiers, l'Eglise leur succederoit. Que les heritages, qui avoient été confisquez, seroient rendus aux anciens propriétaires, soit qu'ils fussent encore en nature, ou qu'ils eussent été aliénez.

CHAPITRE XXII.

Heureux Etat de l'Empire.

L'EMPEREUR envoia dans toutes les Provinces, ces loix qu'il avoit faites en faveur de la Religion Chrêtienne ; n'étant pas content de faire sentir aux Fidéles les effets de sa bonté, il étendit sa libéralité jusques sur les Paiens & les infidéles. Les peuples de l'Orient, qui avoient autrefois souhaité avec une ardeur incroiable, de joüir de la même prospérité, dont ils avoient oüi dire que joüissoient les peuples de l'Occident, ne pouvoient se lasser de se dire heureux, & de loüer la générosité de l'Empereur ; auquel ils en étoient redevables.

CHAPITRE XXIII.

Reconnoissance de Constantin envers Dieu.

CONSTANTIN bien loin de s'attribuer la gloire de ses victoires, la rendit à Dieu, & protesta publiquement qu'il tenoit de sa bonté, la souveraine puissance. Quiconque lira les lettres qu'il fit expédier en grec & en latin sur ce sujet, & qu'il envoia dans les Provinces, y verra de certaines marques de son humble reconnoissance. Il y en avoit une adressée aux Chrêtiens, & l'autre aux peuples qui ne faisoient point profession de nôtre Religion. Je croi devoir insérer ici la copie de cette derniére, & pour en conserver la mémoire, & pour confirmer la vérité de ce que j'ai dit de la piété de Constantin. Elle a été faite sur l'exemplaire qui est entre mes mains, & qui est signé de celle de l'Empereur.

CHAPITRE XXIV.

Loi de Constantin touchant la Religion Chrétienne & la Piété véritable.

Constantin Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste: Aux Peuples de Palestine.

„ IL y a long-tems que ceux qui sont dans la „ créance, où il faut être touchant la divinité, „ ont reconnu clairement la différence qu'il y a „ entre ceux qui combattent la Religion Chrétien„ne, & ceux qui la défendent. On voit mainte„nant avec une plus grande évidence que jamais, „ l'extra-

„l'extravagance des doutes que l'on a faits sur ce
„sujet; & la puissance divine se manifeste par des
„témoignages incontestables. Ceux qui obser-
„vent cette sainte loi, joüissent de toute sorte de
„biens, & viennent heureusement à bout de leurs
„entreprises, au lieu que ceux qui demeurent
„dans l'impiété, ne trouvent que ce qu'ils méri-
„tent. Quel bien pourroient-ils avoir dans le
„tems qu'ils refusent de reconnoître l'unique
„Auteur de tous les biens? Les choses semblent
„parler d'elles-mêmes.

CHAPITRE XXV.

Exemple tiré de l'antiquité.

„QUICONQUE rappelera dans son esprit le
„tems passé, trouvera que ceux qui ont pris
„la justice & la probité pour régle de leur condui-
„te, ont réüssi en tout ce qu'ils ont entrepris, au
„lieu que ceux qui ont commis des crimes, qui
„ont été si insolens qui de s'élever contre Dieu, &
„si cruels que de n'avoir aucune compassion des
„miséres de leurs freres, qui ont enlevé leur
„bien, noirci leur réputation par de fausses accu-
„sations, & leur ont fait souffrir le bannisse-
„ment, & la mort, & qui n'ont jamais conçu
„un sincére repentir de ces desordres, ont été
„traitez comme ils méritoient. Ce n'est pas sans
„raison que deux conduites différentes, ont des
„succez qui le sont aussi.

CHAPITRE XXVI.

De ceux qui ont excité la persécution, & de ceux qui l'ont soufferte.

„ CEUX qui ont la crainte de Dieu devant les „ yeux, & qui n'agissent que par de bonnes „ intentions, qui méprisent les ménaces des hom„ mes, & les périls de la vie presente par l'espé„ rance des biens à venir, souffrent avec une pa„ tience inébranlable des traitemens qui, quoi„ que fâcheux, ne sauroient être de longue du„ rée. Plus les travaux qu'ils ont supportez, ont „ été pénibles; plus la gloire, qui les a suivis, a „ été éclatante. Ceux au contraire qui ont foulé „ aux piez la justice, qui ont maltraité les servi„ teurs de Dieu, qui n'ont point cru être malheu„ reux, ni coûpables, quand ils les ont condamnez „ à mort, pour une si bonne cause, & qui n'ont pas „ jugé que ceux qu'ils condamnoient de la sorte, „ fussent heureux, bien qu'ils conservassent à „ Dieu, la fidélité qu'ils lui avoient promise; ceux„ là, dis-je, ont eu le déplaisir de voir leurs armées „ en déroute, & taillées en piéces. Ils n'ont point „ donné de batailles, qu'ils n'aient perduës.

CHAPITRE XXVII.

Malheurs arrivez aux auteurs de la persécution.

„ C'EST de ces crimes que sont venuës les guer„ res les plus cruelles, & les desolations les „ plus déplorables. C'est de-là qu'a procédé la di„ sette des biens les plus nécessaires, & l'inondation des

„ des maux les plus terribles. Les auteurs de l'im-
„ piété ont eu une fin tragique, ou ont mené une
„ vie infame, & plus triste par leur propre aveu, que
„ n'auroit été la mort. Leur misére a été en quel-
„ que sorte égale à leur injustice. Plus l'insolence,
„ avec laquelle chacun d'eux s'est opposé à la loi
„ de Dieu, a été extréme, plus le châtiment qu'il
„ a subi, a été rigoureux. Ils n'ont pas été seule-
„ ment punis par les peines de cette vie. Ils ont
„ été tourmentez par l'appréhension des suppli-
„ ces, qui sont préparez dans l'autre.

CHAPITRE XXVIII.

Dieu se sert de Constantin, pour arrêter le cours de l'impiété.

„ UNE impiété aussi étrange, & aussi horrible
„ que celle-là, s'étant emparée de l'esprit &
„ du cœur d'un nombre si prodigieux de person-
„ nes, & tout l'Etat en étant infecté, comme
„ d'une maladie contagieuse, qui le réduisoit à
„ un extréme danger, & qui avoit besoin d'un
„ remede fort puissant & fort efficace, duquel
„ Dieu a-t-il eu agréable de se servir? Quand je
„ parle de Dieu, j'entens celui qui l'est véritable-
„ ment, & qui a une puissance éternelle. On peut
„ sans blesser la modestie, publier les bien-faits
„ que l'on a reçus de lui. Il a eu la bonté de se ser-
„ vir de moi pour l'exécution de ses desseins. Il
„ m'a tiré par un effet de sa sagesse & de sa puissan-
„ ce infinie, des bors de l'Océan Britannique, & de
„ l'extrémité des Païs, où le Soleil se couche, &
„ m'a donné la force de dissiper comme un déluge
„ de maux, qui avoient couvert la face de la terre,
„ pour attirer les hommes à l'observation de sa
„ loi, & pour accroître la Foi & la Religion.

CHAPITRE XXIX.

Pieux sentimens de Constantin. Eloge des Confesseurs.

„ JE ne manquerai jamais de reconnoissance pour „ un bien-fait si signalé. Regardant comme une „ faveur singuliére, la bonté que Dieu a euë de „ me choisir, pour me faire le Ministre, & l'exé- „ cuteur de ses ordres, je me rendis en Orient, „ que je trouvai comme accablé de maux, dont „ l'extrémité & le danger avoient besoin des der- „ niers remédes. Je reconnois que je tiens de Dieu „ l'ame, la vie, la respiration & le sentiment. Je „ sai tres-certainement que ceux qui ont mis en „ lui leur espérance, n'ont point besoin de l'esti- „ me, ni de l'affection des hommes, & qu'ils „ possédent des honneurs, d'autant plus solides „ qu'il menent une vie plus exemte de défauts & „ de péchez. Je n'en suis pas moins obligé à les „ délivrer de l'oppression, qu'ils ont soufferte en „ certains tems, & des véxations que l'on ne doit „ jamais faire à des personnes innocentes, & que „ l'on ne sauroit accuser du moindre crime. Ce „ seroit une chose étrange qu'ils eussent fait paroî- „ tre leur fermeté & leur constance, sous le régne „ des Empereurs, qui ne les ont persécutez qu'en „ haine de leur piété, & du culte qu'ils rendoient „ à Dieu, & que leur réputation & leur gloire ne „ reçût pas un nouvel éclat, sous le régne d'un „ Empereur qui sert le même Dieu.

CHA-

CHAPITRE XXX.

Disposition faite en faveur des exilez.

„ QUE ceux qui ont été exilez par la sentence
„ injuste d'un Juge cruel, pour avoir refusé
„ généreusement, de renoncer à la créance, & au
„ culte d'un Dieu, auquel ils s'étoient consacrez
„ de tout leur cœur, & que ceux qui ont été mis
„ au nombre des Officiers de la Cour, bien qu'ils
„ n'en fussent pas auparavant, aient la liberté de
„ retourner en leurs maisons, & d'y demeurer en
„ repos. Que ceux qui ont été dépoüillez de leurs
„ biens, & réduits à une extréme misére, soient
„ rétablis en leur premier état, & joüissent avec
„ joie, & d'humbles actions de graces, des ef-
„ fets de la bonté de Dieu.

CHAPITRE. XXXI.

Rappel de ceux qui étoient dans les Isles.

„ J'ORDONNE que ceux qui sont retenus con-
„ tre leur volonté dans les Isles, joüissent de
„ l'effet de la même grace. Qu'ils sortent de ces
„ tristes & afreuses solitudes, où ils ne voient
„ que des montagnes incultes, & une mer ora-
„ geuse, & qu'ils aillent goûter les plaisirs inno-
„ cens, que leur fournira la compagnie de leurs
„ proches. Que ceux qui ont souffert la disette,
„ & les incommoditez qui l'accompagnent,
„ soient comblez de biens, & délivrez de crain-
„ te. Faisant gloire comme je fais d'étre serviteur
„ de Dieu, je serois tres-fâché que l'on pût dire,
„ ou que l'on pût croire qu'aucune personne vécût

„ en

„ en crainte soûs mon régne. Je tâche autant que „ je puis, de reformer les abus qui se sont glis„ sez soûs les régnes précédens.„

CHAPITRE XXXII.

Rappel de ceux qui avoient été condamnez à travailler aux métaux, ou aux autres ouvrages publiques.

„ QUE ceux qui ont été condamnez à travail„ ler aux métaux, ou aux autres ouvrages „ publics, changent cette pénible occupation & „ ce laborieux exercice avec un honnête loisir & „ & un agréable repos. Que si quelques-uns d'en„ tr'eux ont été privez de la liberté, & notez d'in„ famie, qu'ils soient rétablis en possession des „ honneurs, & des droits qui leur appartenoient „ auparavant.

CHAPITRE XXXIII.

Rétablissement de ceux qui avoient été privez de leurs charges.

„ QUE ceux qui aiant autrefois possédé des „ charges dans les armées, en ont été pri„ vez soûs ce cruel prétexte qu'ils en estimoient „ moins l'exercice, que celui de leur Religion, „ aient la liberté, ou d'y rentrer, & d'en faire „ les fonctions, ou de vivre en repos. Il est bien „ juste qu'aprés avoir signalé leur courage au mi„ lieu des plus terribles tourmens, il ne dépende „ que de leur choix, ou de joüir des honneurs

„ de

„de leurs charges, ou de goûter la douceur du
„loisir.

CHAPITRE XXXIV.

Rétablissement de ceux qui avoient été condamnez à travailler aux Ouvrages des femmes, ou réduits en servitude.

„ QUE ceux qui ont été dégradez de noblesse, & condamnez injustement à travailler aux
„ manufactures de toiles, & à d'autres ouvrages
„ semblables, ou qui nonobstant l'avantage de
„ leur naissance, ont été censez esclaves du fis-
„ que, rentrent en possession de leur liberté, &
„ passent agréablement le reste de leur vie.
„ Que ceux qui étant d'une condition libre, ont
„ été vendus par la plus violente & la plus inhu-
„ maine de toutes les usurpations, & ont sou-
„ vent gémi, lorsqu'ils étoient contraints de ren-
„ dre des services, ausquels ils n'étoient point
„ accoûtumez, se réjoüissent de se voir rétablis
„ en un moment dans les droits de leur naissan-
„ ce, de retourner entre les bras de leurs parens,
„ d'étre exemts des services, qui sont au dessous
„ d'eux, & qu'ils perdent le souvenir de leur mi-
„ sére.

CHA-

CHAPITRE XXXV.

Restitution du bien des Martyrs, & des Confesseurs.

» JE ne puis dissimuler l'injustice qui a été
» soufferte par ceux qui soûs divers prétextes,
» ont été depoüillez de leurs biens. Si quelques-
» uns en haine de ce qu'ils avoient généreusement
» soûtenu de rudes combats pour la défense de
» leur foi, ont été dépoüillez de leurs biens, ou
» si d'autres pour avoir confessé qu'ils étoient
» Chrétiens, ont été contraints d'abandonner
» leur Païs; ou enfin si d'autres ont été privez de
» ce qu'ils possédoient, sans avoir été condamnez
» à mort, leur succession doit étre recueïllie par
» leurs proches. Les loix aiant ajugé les succes-
» sions aux plus proches parens, ils seront aisez
» à reconnoître; & d'ailleurs il n'y a rien de si ju-
» ste que de rendre ces biens là aux heritiers, aus-
» quels ils auroient appartenu, si les Martyrs &
» les Confesseurs étoient morts d'une mort na-
» turelle.

CHAPITRE XXXVI.

Disposition faite en faveur de l'Eglise, au défaut des proches.

» QUE s'il ne se trouve aucun parent qui puisse
» recueïllir la succession des Martyrs, des
» Confesseurs, ou de ceux qui pour conserver
» leur foi, ont quitté leur Païs, elle appartien-
» dra à l'Eglise. Les morts ne seront pas fâchez
» d'avoir pour heritiére, celle pour laquelle ils se
» sont

„ sont exposez à toute sorte de dangers. Je croi ne „ devoir pas ômettre que si quelques-uns de ceux, „ dont je viens de parler, a trouvé à propos de „ faire donation de son bien, mon intention est „ qu'elle soit exécutée.

CHAPITRE XXXVII.

Restitution des terres & des maisons qui ont appartenu aux Martyrs, & aux Confesseurs.

„ COMME je soûhaite que cette loi-ci soit si „ claire, qu'il n'y ait personne qui n'en entende la disposition ; que ceux qui sont détenteurs, ou d'une maison, ou d'une terre, ou „ d'un autre heritage qui ait autrefois appartenu „ à ceux dont j'ai parlé, sachent qu'ils le doivent „ déclarer eux-mêmes, & en faire incessamment „ la restitution. Bien qu'ils aient reçu de grands „ revenus sans titre légitime, je ne croi pas que „ l'équité permette que l'on les oblige de les rendre.

CHAPITRE XXXVIII.

Déclaration requise au cas proposé.

„ J'ENTENS néanmoins qu'ils déclarent par „ un acte exprés la quantité des revenus qu'ils „ ont touchez, & qu'ils me demandent les lettres de grace nécessaires en ce cas. Ce sera comme une satisfaction publique, qu'ils feront de „ leur avarice. Ils diront peut-être pour leur excuse qu'au tems où l'on ne voioit que de tristes „ images des plus horribles cruautez, au tems „ auquel on arrachoit les maîtres de leurs maisons,

„ ſons, & on les maſſacroit ſans pitié, auquel on
„ banniſſoit les innocens, & auquel les heritages
„ demeuroient comme abandonnez, & expoſez
„ en proie, ils n'ont pû ſe diſpenſer de s'en em-
„ parer. Que ceux qui prétendent couvrir leur
„ cupidité de ce prétexte, ſachent qu'ils ne le
„ pourront faire impunément, & que le ſoin que
„ je prendrai de m'y oppoſer, fait une partie du
„ culte que je dois à Dieu. Il leur ſeroit mainte-
„ nant périlleux de retenir ce qu'il leur a été autre-
„ fois néceſſaire d'accepter. D'ailleurs il faut ar-
„ rêter autant que l'on peut, ſoit par la raiſon ou
„ par l'exemple, le cours de la cupidité.

CHAPITRE XXXIX.

Reſtitution des biens uſurpez par les Princes ſur l'Egliſe.

„ Si le fiſque ſe trouve en poſſeſſion des biens,
„ dont je parle, il ne les pourra conſerver.
„ Il reſtituëra aux Egliſes ce qu'il aura uſurpé ſur
„ elles, ſoit maiſons, terres, jardins, ou autres
„ heritages avec toutes les dépendances.

CHAPITRE XL.

Reſtitution des Oratoires & des Cimétiéres.

„ Qui pourroit douter ſi les lieux qui ont été
„ conſacrez par les reliques des Martyrs, &
„ qui conſervent la mémoire précieuſe de leur
„ mort, appartiennent à l'Egliſe? Qui feroit
„ difficulté d'ordonner qu'ils lui ſoient reſtituez?
„ On ne ſauroit rien faire de ſi agréable à Dieu, ni
„ de ſi utile à ſoi-même, que de prendre ſoin que
„ les

„ les biens qui ont été enlevez aux Eglises par des „ scélérats soûs de tres-injustes prétextes, leur „ soient rendus sans aucun retardement.

CHAPITRE XLI.

Restitution des biens qui avoient été ou donnez où vendus, encore qu'ils appartinssent à l'Eglise.

„ POUR n'oublier aucun cas, auquel il ne soit pourvû, que ceux qui ont àquis du fisque „ des biens appartenans aux Eglises, ou qui en „ ont obtenu le don, sachent que c'est en vain „ qu'ils ont prétendu les posséder, & bien qu'en „ les achêtant, ils aient mérité d'encourir ma dis- „ grace, je ne laisserai pas de leur faire sentir au- „ tant qu'il me sera possible, les effets de mon „ affection.

CHAPITRE XLII.

Exhortation à la piété.

„ COMME il paroît avec toute sorte de certi- „ tude & d'évidence que la misére & la tri- „ stesse qui avoient couvert la face de la terre, sont „ dissipées par la puissance infinie de Dieu, & par „ les soins qu'il a eu agréable que j'aie pris pour ce „ sujet, je ne doute point que chacun ne reconnoisse „ la grandeur de la grace qu'il nous a faite, quand „ il a exterminé les méchans, qu'il a rendu la paix „ & la joie aux gens de bien, & qu'il leur a per- „ mis de s'aquitter en sureté des devoirs de la pié- „ té, & de rendre aux personnes consacrées à son „ service, les honneurs qui leur sont dûs. Ces

„ per-

„ personnes pieuses & saintes sortiront comme de
„ l'obscurité de la nuit, pour joüir de la lumiére
„ du jour, & observeront la presente loi avec une
„ parfaite fidélité, & une entiére soûmission.
„ Qu'elle soit publiée dans les Provinces d'O-
„ rient.

CHAPITRE XLIII.

Exécution de cette loi.

VOILA ce que contenoit la premiére lettre qui nous fut envoiée de la part de l'Empereur. Elle fut à l'heure-même observée tres-exactement, & on vit soûs son régne tout le contraire de ce que l'on avoit vû soûs la domination des tirans. Ceux en faveur desquels l'Edit avoit été fait, joüirent de l'effet de la libéralité de l'Empereur.

CHAPITRE XLIV.

Gouvernement des Provinces accordez à des Chrétiens. Idolatrie défendue.

L'EMPEREUR garda incontinent aprés une conduite toute conforme à la loi qu'il venoit de faire à l'avantage de la Religion. Il donna la plus grande partie des Gouvernemens à des Chrétiens, & défendit aux Gouverneurs qui étoient encore attachez aux superstitions du Paganisme, d'offrir des sacrifices aux Idoles. Il fit la même défense aux Préfets du Prétoire qui précédoient les Gouverneurs, & possédoient les premiéres dignitez. Il vouloit que s'ils faisoient profession de la piété Chrétienne, ils en suivissent les régles; & s'ils étoient encore Paiens, il

ne pouvoit souffrir qu'ils adorassent publiquement les Idoles.

CHAPITRE XLV.

Idolatrie défendue. Eglises bâties.

On publia deux autres loix au même-tems. La premiére tendoit à abolir le culte des Idoles qui avoit été en usage dans les Villes & à la campagne, & défendoit généralement d'ériger des statuës en l'honneur des Dieux, de prédire l'avenir, & d'égorger des victimes. La seconde loi ordonnoit que l'on bâtiroit des Eglises plus spacieuses, & plus vastes qu'auparavant, comme si l'on eût été assuré que tous les peuples renonceroient aux erreurs & aux extravagances du Paganisme, pour se soûmettre humblement au service de leur Créateur. La pieté inspiroit cette pensée à l'Empereur, & le portoit à donner ces ordres-là aux Gouverneurs des Provinces. Il étoit ordonné par la même loi que l'on tireroit du tresor Roial, tout ce qui seroit nécessaire pour l'accomplissement d'un si loüable dessein, & que l'on n'éviteroit aucune dépense. L'Empereur écrivit pour ce sujet à tous les Evêques, & me fit l'honneur de m'écrire en ces termes, avant que d'avoir écrit à aucun autre.

CHAPITRE XLVI.

Lettre de Constantin à Eusébe, & aux autres Evêques pour la construction des Eglises.

„ Les fidéles serviteurs de nôtre Sauveur aiant
„ été persécutez jusques ici par la violence
„ des

,, des tirans : Je ſuis tres-perſuadé, mon tres-
,, cher frere, que les édifices des Egliſes, ſont
,, en tres-mauvais état par le peu de ſoin que l'on
,, a eu de les entretenir, & que l'on n'a pû même
,, les parer avec la bienſéance convenable, à-cau-
,, ſe de la crainte de la perſécution. Mais mainte-
,, nant que la Religion Chrétienne eſt libre, &
,, que le dragon a été privé de l'autorité abſoluë
,, par un ordre de la Providence, & par un effet
,, de mes ſoins; je ne doute point que tout le mon-
,, de ne reconnoiſſe la grandeur & la majeſté de
,, Dieu, & que ceux qui ont commis des fautes
,, par erreur, ou par foibleſſe, ne tâchent de s'en
,, corriger. Avertiſſez les Evêques, les Prêtres,
,, & les Diacres de vôtre connoiſſance, qu'ils
,, pourvoient avec une application particuliére
,, aux bâtimens des Egliſes, aux réparations de
,, celles qui tombent en ruine, à l'augmentation
,, de celles qui ſont trop petites, & à la conſtru-
,, ction entiére de celles qui ſeront jugées néceſ-
,, ſaires. Demandez au Gouverneur de la Provin-
,, ce, & au Préfet du Prétoire, ce qui ſera néceſ-
,, ſaire pour cét effet, & que les autres le deman-
,, dent de la même ſorte. Ils ont ordre de ſatisfaire
,, exactement à tout ce que vôtre ſainteté deſire-
,, ra de leur part. Je prie Dieu qu'il vous conſerve,
,, mon tres-cher frere. On envoia à chaque Evê-
que une copie de cette lettre. Chaque Gouverneur de Province reçut un ordre conformé, & la volonté de l'Empereur fut exécutée avec une merveilleuſe promtitude dans l'étenduë de tous les Païs de ſon obeïſſance.

CHA-

CHAPITRE XLVII.

Constantin écrit une lettre contre les Idoles.

CONSTANTIN faisant de jour en jour de nouveaux progrez dans la piété, écrivit une lettre aux habitans des Provinces, touchant l'aveuglement, avec lequel ses prédecesseurs avoient adoré les Idoles. Il exhorta ses sujets par la même lettre à reconnoître Dieu, l'unique Souverain de l'Univers, & à mettre l'espérance de leur salut dans la médiation de Jesus Christ. Je l'ai traduite de Latin en Grec sur l'original écrit de sa propre main, & je l'insérerai ici pour faire entendre à toute la postérité, la voix éclatante avec laquelle il a publié les grandeurs de Dieu son Maître.

CHAPITRE LXVIII.

Edit de l'Empereur Constantin contre le culte des Dieux.

Préface de la Vertu & du Vice.

Constantin, Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste: Aux Habitans des Provinces d'Orient.

„ LA lumiére que la nature a répanduë dans „ l'esprit de tous les hommes, suffit pour „ leur faire découvrir les soins que la Providence „ prend du gouvernement de l'univers. Ceux qui „ s'avancent par l'étude vers la vérité, ne doutent point que quiconque fait une sérieuse ré- „ fléxion sur la diversité des objets, qui sont ex-

„ posez à ses yeux, n'arrive enfin à la connois- sance de leur principe. C'est pourquoi une per- „ sonne sage ne s'étonnera jamais de la multitude „ ni de la variété des opinions, qui partagent les „ hommes touchant le choix qu'ils doivent faire „ d'un genre de vie. Rien ne reléve si fort la „ beauté de la Vertu, que la laideur du Vice qui „ lui est contraire. L'une a des récompenses cer- „ taines ; & l'autre ne peut attendre qu'un rigou- „ reux châtiment, qui sera prononcé par un Juge „ également Souverain & équitable. Je vous pro- „ poserai ici le plus clairement qu'il me sera possi- „ ble, l'espérance sainte que j'ai des biens à ve- „ nir.

CHAPITRE XLIX.

De Constance pere de Constantin. De Dioclétien, & de Maximien.

„ J'AI toûjours eu un grand éloignement des „ Empereurs précédens, en haine de la dureté „ de leur naturel. Il n'y a eu que Constance mon „ pere, qui a eu de la douceur pour ses sujets, „ comme il a eu de la piété envers Dieu. Les au- tres ont été des esprits mal-faits qui se portoient „ bien moins à la clémence, qu'à la cruauté du- „ rant tout le cours de leur régne. Ils ont usé de „ rigueur, & combattu la bonne doctrine. Leur „ fureur est montée jusques à cét excez que d'ex- citer une guerre civile au milieu d'une profonde „ paix.

CHA-

CHAPITRE L.

Persécution excitée à l'occasion du silence, auquel l'oracle d'Apollon étoit réduit.

„ On dit qu'Apollon déclara en ce tems-là par
„ une voix sortie du fond d'une caverne, &
„ non de la bouche d'un homme, que les gens de
„ bien l'empêchoient de dire la vérité, & qu'ils
„ étoient cause des fausses prédictions qu'il avoit
„ faites. Dioclétien laissa croître ses cheveux,
„ pour témoigner sa douleur & déplora le mal-
„ heur, où le siécle étoit réduit de n'avoir plus
„ d'Oracles. Mais voions la suite.

CHAPITRE LI.

Constantin reconnoît dés sa jeunesse l'innocence des Chrétiens.

„ Je vous prens maintenant à témoin, Sei-
„ gneur, qui êtes dans le ciel. Vous savez qu'é-
„ tant encore fort jeune, j'entendis que le misera-
„ ble Empereur, qui tenoit alors le premier rang,
„ demanda à un de ses Gardes, qui étoient ces
„ gens de bien, dont on faisoit tant de bruit, &
„ qu'un Prêtre Paien qui étoit present, lui répon-
„ dit que c'étoient les Chrétiens. Aiant écouté
„ cette réponse avec beaucoup de joie, il tira con-
„ tre l'innocence, l'épée qui ne doit être em-
„ ploiée, que contre le crime. Il écrivit avec la
„ pointe de cette épée, s'il est permis de parler
„ ainsi, des Edits sanglans, & commanda aux
„ Juges de se servir de toute l'adresse de leur esprit,
„ pour inventer de nouveaux supplices.

CHAPITRE LII.

Persécution des Chrétiens.

„ La piété fut alors persecutée avec une licen-
„ ce effrenée,& accablée de toute sorte d'ou-
„ trages. La modestie qui attire le respect des
„ plus barbares, fut exposée aux railleries san-
„ glantes, & aux plus rigoureux traitemens que
„ les Romains pussent inventer. Y a-t-il des sup-
„ plices, des naufrages, ou des incendies dont
„ quelque âge, ou quelque condition ait été ex-
„ emte La terre a pleuré, le ciel a gémi, & le
„ Soleil a été obscurci de l'horreur de ces misères.

CHAPITRE LIII.

Douceur des étrangers envers les Chrétiens.

„ Les étrangers se vantent aujourd'hui de la
„ civilité, avec laquelle ils ont reçu les Chré-
„ tiens, qui étoient chassez de leur Païs, & de la
„ bonté qu'ils ont eue non seulement de leur sau-
„ ver la vie, mais de leur permettre l'exercice de
„ leur Religion. C'est une tache honteuse, dont
„ le nom Romain a été flétri en ce siécle.

CHAPITRE LIV.

Punition des auteurs de la persécution.

„ Qu'est-il besoin de rafraichir la memoi-
„ re de cette affliction générale, & de ce
duëil

„ duëil commun de l'univers ? Les auteurs de ces „ maux sont péris miserablement & ont été précipitez au fond de l'enfer. Ils ont pris les armes „ les uns contre les autres ; se sont détruits par „ leur propres forces, & n'ont laissé ni postérité „ ni mémoire de leur nom. Un mal-heur aussi „ extréme, & aussi déplorable que celui-là, ne „ leurs seroit sans doute jamais arrivé, s'ils n'a„ voient été trompez par les impostures de leur „ Apollon.

CHAPITRE LV.

Priére de Constantin. Confession de la puissance de la Croix.

„ Je vous supplie maintenant, ô Dieu, dont la „ la grandeur est infinie, de regarder d'un œil „ favorable les peuples d'Orient, qui ont gemi si „ long-tems dans l'oppression, & de permettre „ qu'ils reçoivent du soulagement par mon mini„ stére. Ce n'est pas sans raison, Seigneur, que „ je vous fais cette humble priére, puisque je n'ai „ rien entrepris que par vôtre ordre. Vôtre Eten„ dart a toûjours precedé mon armée, & l'a ren„ duë victorieuse, & toutes les fois que la nécessi„ té publique m'engage à prendre les armes, je le „ suy comme un signe de l'espérance que j'ai eu „ vôtre bonté. C'est pour cela que je vous offre „ sans cesse un cœur rempli de vôtre amour, & de „ vôtre crainte. J'ai un amour sincére pour vôtre „ nom, & une crainte salutaire de la puissance, „ dont vous m'avez donné tant de marques, & par „ laquelle vous avez affermi ma foi. C'est pour„ quoi je me presente avec joie, pour soûtenir vô„ tre sainte maison, que les exécrables tirans ont „ tâché d'abattre.

CHAPITRE LVI.

Constantin souhaite que tout le monde embrasse la Religion Chrétienne, & ne contraint pourtant personne de l'embrasser.

„ JE souhaite de tout mon cœur pour le bien
„ commun de toute la terre, que vôtre peuple
„ joüisse d'une paix profonde, & qui ne soit trou-
„ blée par aucun tumulte, je consens que ceux
„ qui sont encore engagez dans les erreurs du pa-
„ ganisme, joüissent du même repos que les Fidé-
„ les. L'équité que l'on gardera envers eux, &
„ l'égalité du traitement, que l'on fera tant à eux
„ qu'aux autres, contribuëra notablement à les
„ mettre dans le bon chemin. Qu'aucun n'en in-
„ quiéte un autre. Que chacun choisisse ce qu'il
„ jugera le plus à propos. Néanmoins ceux qui
„ jugeront sainement, assureront hardiment qu'il
„ n'y a que ceux qui gardent vos commande-
„ mens qui menent une vie innocente & sain-
„ te. Que ceux qui se soustraient de vôtre obéis-
„ sance, joüissent des temples consacrez au menson-
„ ge, puisqu'ils en veulent avoir. Pour nous,
„ nous demeurerons dans la maison de vôtre véri-
„ té, où vous nous avez reçus dés le commence-
„ ment. Nous souhaitons qu'ils y entrent aussi-
„ bien que nous, & qu'ils joüissent de l'avantage
„ de nôtre société.

CHAPITRE LVII.

Actions de graces.

„ NÔTRE Religion n'est pas nouvelle. Nous „ tenons pour certain que vous l'avez insti„ tuée avec le culte qui vous est dû, dés que vous „ avez créé l'univers. Les hommes s'en sont éloi„ gnez depuis, & sont tombez en diverses erreurs. „ Mais pour les en retirer, vous avez envoié vô„ tre Fils qui leur a presenté une lumiére tres-écla„ tante.

CHAPITRE LVIII.

Actions de graces renduës à Dieu par Constantin.

„ VOS ouvrages sont des preuves manifestes „ de ce que je dis. Vous nous avez rendus in„ nocens, & fidéles par vôtre puissance. Le cours „ du Soleil & de la Lune est réglé, & il y a une „ merveilleuse justesse dans le mouvement des „ astres. Les saisons ont une révolution égale & „ perpétuelle. La masse de la terre est appuïée sur „ vôtre parole, comme sur un fondement iné„ branlable. Les vens se proménent dans l'air. Les „ eaux coulent incessamment sur la terre. La mer „ demeure renfermée dans l'étenduë des bornes „ que vous lui avez posées. Il n'y a rien dans l'un „ ni dans l'autre de ces Elémens qui ne soit d'un „ admirable usage. Si l'univers n'avoit été disposé „ de la sorte par l'ordre de vôtre Providence, il y „ a long-tems que les qualitez contraires, & le „ combat réciproque des parties qui le composent, „ en auroient causé la ruine. Les esprits qui se sont

„ guerre, la feroient aux hommes avec beaucoup „ plus de cruauté, bien qu'ils la fassent déja d'une „ maniére invisible.

CHAPITRE LIX.

Continuation d'actions de graces.

„ Je vous réns de tres-humbles actions de graces, mon Dieu & mon Seigneur. Plus on remarque de différence dans les inclinations, & „ dans les sentimens des hommes; plus ceux qui „ ont découvert la vérité, se sentent affermis dans „ la Religion. S'il y a quelqu'un qui ne veüille „ point étre guéri; qu'il n'en rejette la faute sur „ aucun autre. On offre le reméde & la guérison „ à tout le monde. Chacun doit seulement prendre garde de ne point offenser une Religion, „ dont l'innocence & la sainteté sont manifestes. „ Joüissons tous en commun de la douceur de la „ paix, qui nous est accordée, & préservons nôtre consience de tout ce qui la pourroit soüiller.

CHAPITRE LX.

Exhortation à la paix.

„ Que personne n'inquiéte ceux qui ne sont „ pas de son sentiment. Si quelqu'un a quelque lumiére, qu'il s'en serve, autant qu'il lui „ sera possible, pour éclairer les autres, sinon „ qu'il les laisse en repos. Autre chose est de donner des combats, pour aquérir la couronne de „ l'immortalité, & autre chose d'user de violence „ pour contraindre à embrasser une Religion. Le „ desir que j'ai eu de ne rien dissimuler de la vérité,

„ m'a

„ m'a obligé à m'étendre sur ce sujet un peu plus
„ que ma douceur ordinaire ne sembloit le per-
„ mettre : Vû principalement que les supersti-
„ tions du Paganisme, sont entiérement abolies,
„ comme quelques-uns l'assurent. C'est ce que
„ j'aurois tâché de persuader à tout le monde, si
„ la préoccupation de quelques-uns ne leur étoit
„ un obstacle invincible.

CHAPITRE LXI.

Contestation excitée par Arius.

L'Empereur publia ces véritez à tous les habitans des Provinces par la lettre qu'il leur écrivit, & tâcha de les détourner de l'idolatrie, & de les porter au culte du vrai Dieu. Au milieu de la joie qu'il tiroit de l'heureux succez d'une si loüable entreprise, il reçut nouvelle d'un tumulte qui avoit notablement troublé la paix de l'Eglise. Il en fut tres-sensiblement touché, & songea à l'heure-même aux moiens d'y apporter du remede. Voici quel étoit le sujet du tumulte. L'état de l'Eglise étoit florissant, & les Fidéles s'adonnoient avec joie à toute sorte de saints exercices. Leur repos étoit si bien affermi qu'il ne pouvoit être ébranlé par aucun ennemi étranger. Mais la jalousie leur dressa un piége. Elle se glissa parmi eux, & incontinent aprés entra impudemment dans les assemblées des saints Evêques, elle les commit les uns contre les autres, & leur suscita des différens & des quéreles soûs prétexte de doctrine. Cette petite étincele excita un grand embrasement, qui commença dans Aléxandrie, s'étendit sur l'Egypte, sur la Libye, sur la haute Thébaïde, & désola de telle sorte un grand nom-

nombre d'autres Provinces, que non seulement les Prêtres entrérent en des contestations pleines d'aigreur; mais que les peuples prenant aussi parti dans les mêmes différens, firent une division, & un schisme tres-funeste. Le scandale en fut si horrible que la doctrine sainte de nôtre Religion devint le sujet des railleries impies, & des boufonneries sacriléges que les Païens faisoient sur leurs théatres.

CHAPITRE LXII.

D'Arius, & des Partisans de Mélèce.

Les uns disputoient dans Aléxandrie avec une opiniâtreté invincible sur les plus sublimes mystéres. D'autres contestoient dans l'Egypte, & dans la haute Thébaïde, sur une question qui avoit été proposée dés auparavant, de sorte qu'il n'y avoit aucune Eglise qui ne fût divisée. La Libye entiére, & les autres Provinces sentirent des atteintes du même mal. Car les Ecclésiastiques d'Aléxandrie aiant écrit aux Evêques touchant leur différend, il n'y en eut aucun qui ne se déclarât pour l'un des deux partis.

CHAPITRE LXIII.

Constantin envoie un Evêque à Aléxandrie, pour terminer le differend.

L'Empereur étant sensiblement touché de la division de l'Eglise, & n'en aiant pas un moindre déplaisir qu'il auroit eu d'une disgrace qui seroit arrivée à sa famille, envoia à Aléxandrie un homme célébre par la solidité de sa foi, & par

par la générosité de la profession qu'il en avoit faite en présence des persécuteurs durant les plus mauvais tems, & lui donna une lettre pour les auteurs du différend. Je croi qu'il sera tres-à-propos de l'insérer en cét endroit, comme une preuve autentique du soin que ce Prince prenoit des affaires de l'Eglise.

CHAPITRE LXIV.

Lettre de Constantin, à Aléxandre Evêque, & à Arius Prêtre.

Constantin, Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste; à Aléxandre, & à Arius.

Dieu qui a la bonté de seconder tous mes desseins, & de conserver tous les hommes, m'est témoin que j'ai été porté par deux motifs à entreprendre ce que j'ai heureusement exécuté.

CHAPITRE LXV.

Soins pris par Constantin, pour rendre la paix à l'Eglise.

„ Je me suis d'abord proposé de réünir les esprits
„ de tous les peuples dans une même créance
„ au sujet de la divinité; & ensuite j'ai souhaitté
„ de délivrer l'univers du joug de la servitude, sous
„ laquelle il gémissoit. J'ai cherché dans mon es-
„ prit des moiens aisez pour venir à bout du pre-
„ mier dessein, sans faire beaucoup d'éclat; & je
„ me suis resolu de prendre les armes pour exécu-
„ ter le second. Je me persuadois que si j'étois as-

sez

„ sez heureux, pour porter les hommes à ado-
„ rer tous le même Dieu, ce changement de Re-
„ ligion en produiroit un autre dans le Gouverne-
„ ment de l'Empire.

CHAPITRE LXVI.

Différens appaisez en Afrique.

„ L'INDISCRETION & la témérité que
„ quelques-uns avoient euë de diviser les peu-
„ ples d'Afrique en plusieurs opinions touchant
„ les matiéres de la Religion, & en plusieurs sectes,
„ aiant passé jusques à un excez de folie & d'extra-
„ vagance tout-à-fait insupportable, je n'ai point
„ trouvé d'autre moien d'en arrêter le cours, que
„ d'enlever du monde l'ennemi commun du genre
„ humain, qui s'opposoit aux decrets de vos sain-
„ tes assemblées, & que d'envoier quelques-uns
„ de mes Officiers, pour mettre d'accord ceux
„ qui formoient, & entretenoient les disputes &
„ les quéreles.

CHAPITRE LXVII.

Que la Religion s'est répanduë de l'Orient dans le reste du monde.

„ LA lumiére de la véritable Religion étant
„ sortie par une faveur particuliére de Dieu
„ de l'Orient, pour se répandre sur le reste de la
„ terre, j'ai jetté d'abord les yeux de mon esprit sur
„ vous, comme sur des Pasteurs qui sont obligez
„ de veiller au salut de tous les peuples. Dés que
„ j'eus remporté la victoire, & triomphé des vain-
„ cus

„ cus, la premiére affaire à laquelle je m'appli-
„ quai, fut celle dont je parle.

CHAPITRE LXVIII.

Constantin exhorte les Ecclésiastiques à la paix.

„ QUE les desseins de la Providence sont mer-
„ veilleux, & que ses secrets sont impénétra-
„ bles! Quelle nouvelle frappa mes oreilles, ou
„ plûtôt quelle douleur perça mon cœur, lorsque
„ j'appris que vous aviez excité entre vous des
„ contestations beaucoup plus fâcheuses que cel-
„ les qui duroient encore en Afrique? Je reconnus
„ que vôtre païs, d'où j'espérois que viendroit la
„ guérison des autres, avoit lui-même besoin de
„ remede. Quand j'ai considéré l'origine, & le
„ sujet de vôtre différend, il m'a semblé fort lé-
„ ger & fort peu digne d'être agité avec tant de
„ chaleur. Etant obligé de vous écrire pour vous
„ exhorter à la paix, j'ai imploré le secours de
„ Dieu, & me suis resolu de m'interposer pour
„ vous mettre d'accord. Quand vos contestations
„ seroient & plus importantes, & plus engagées
„ qu'elles ne sont, je ne laisserois pas d'espérer de
„ rétablir parmi vous une parfaite intelligence.
„ Il y a donc plus d'apparence de me promettre de
„ vous réünir, puisque vous n'avez aucune raison
„ de vous diviser.

CHAPITRE LXIX.

Occasion de la contestation.

„ J'APPRENS que vos disputes sont nées de ce „ que vous Aléxandre, avez demandé aux Prê„ tres de vôtre Eglise ce qu'ils tenoient touchant „ un endroit de la Loi, ou plûtôt touchant une „ question fort inutile ; & que vous Arius, avez „ indiscrétement fait une réponse qui ne devoit „ jamais entrer dans vôtre esprit, & que si elle y „ étoit entrée, ne devoit jamais sortir de vôtre „ bouche. C'est de-là que sont venus vos différens „ & vos disputes, le refus de la communion, le „ schisme qui romt la correspondance mutuelle „ des fidéles, & qui les sépare du corps de l'Egli„ se. Demandez-vous pardon les uns aux autres, „ & vous accordez aux conditions raisonnables „ que vôtre conserviteur vous propose. Il ne faloit „ ni faire les questions que vous avez faites, ni y „ répondre. Car bien que ces questions-là, qui „ ne sont point nécessaires, & qui ne sont agitées „ pour l'ordinaire que par des personnes qui ont „ trop de loisir, servent à exercer l'esprit, il est „ plus à propos de les tenir secrétes, que de les „ publier légérement devant le peuple. Combien „ y a-t-il peu de personnes qui soient capables de „ pénétrer une matiére si relevée, & de l'expli„ quer avec des paroles qui répondent à sa dignité ? „ Quand il y auroit des personnes capables de l'ex„ pliquer de la sorte, à combien de personnes du „ peuple la pourroient-ils faire entendre ? Les „ plus habiles peuvent-ils entrer dans l'examen de „ ces questions, sans se mettre en danger de faire „ de grandes fautes ? Il n'en faut parler qu'avec „ beaucoup de retenuë, de peur que si ceux qui en

voudroient

,, voudroient parler ne les expliquoient qu'impar-
,, faitement, ou si ceux qui les écoutoient les
,, comprenoient trop grossiérement, le peuple
,, ne tombât ou dans le blasphême ou dans le
,, schisme.

CHAPITRE LXX.

Exhortation à la paix.

,, QUE ceux qui ont interrogé les autres in-
,, discrétement, & que ceux qui leur ont ré-
,, pondu mal à propos se pardonnent réciproque-
,, ment. Il ne s'agit entre vous d'aucun comman-
,, dement de nôtre loi, ni d'aucun dogme qui re-
,, garde le culte qui est dû à Dieu. Vous êtes tous
,, dans le même sentiment, & il est aisé que vous
,, vous réünissiez dans la même communion.

CHAPITRE LXXI.

Suite de la même exhortation.

,, LA bien-séance ni la raison même ne per-
,, mettent pas que vous gouverniez le peuple
,, de Dieu, pendant que vous contestez ensemble
,, avec aigreur pour un sujet trop léger. Je me
,, servirai d'un petit exemple, pour avertir des
,, personnes aussi éclairées que vous, de leur de-
,, voir. Vous savez que bien que les Philosophes
,, de la même secte conviennent dans les mêmes
,, principes, ils ne s'accordent pas toûjours dans
,, les suites & les dépendances de leur doctrine.
,, Ils ne laissent pas pour cela d'être en bonne in-
,, telligence. N'est-il pas plus juste que vous qui
,, avez l'honneur d'être les Ministres de Dieu,

vous

» vous accordiez ensemble touchant les points de » nôtre Religion ? Faites, je vous prie, une ré» fléxion sérieuse sur ce que je vous ai déja dit, & » considérez s'il est raisonnable, que pour un vain » combat de paroles, les freres s'arment contre » les freres, & divisent l'assemblée sainte des Fi» déles. C'est une basse conduite, qui convient » à des personnes ignorantes comme est le peuple, » ou foibles comme sont les enfans, mais qui ne » convient nullement à des hommes éclairez & » sages, comme doivent être les Prêtres. Eloi» gnons-nous des piéges que le démon nous dres» se. Nôtre Dieu & nôtre Sauveur nous presente » à tous la même lumiére. Je vous prie de me » permettre, à moi, dis-je, qui fais gloire de le » servir, & de l'honorer, d'achever avec son assi» stance, l'ouvrage que j'ai commencé; & d'ex» citer son peuple par la force de mes raisons à se » réünir dans une même communion. Puisque » vous faites tous profession de la même foi, com» me je ne l'ai déja que trop répété, que vous » étes d'accord touchant les points de la Religion, » & que vous observez les mêmes commande» mens, le sujet sur lequel vous contestez, ne » concernant aucun article capital de la piété, il » n'a point dû causer de schisme. Je ne dis pas ce» ci pour vous obliger à être tous de même senti» ment touchant l'opinion impertinente, ou enfin » touchant l'opinion telle quelle soit, qui vous di» vise. Vous pouvez conserver la communion, & » la paix, bien que vous ne soyez pas d'accord » touchant quelques points de peu d'importance. » N'aiez tous que la même pensée & la même foi, » touchant l'unité de Dieu, & l'étenduë de sa » providence. Que si en disputant avec peut-être » trop de subtilité sur ces questions vaines & inu» tiles, vous ne vous accordez pas les uns avec les » autres, que chacun retienne son sentiment dans

Je

„ le secret de son cœur. Mais conservez inviolablement le lien de la charité, le dépôt de la foi, „ & les précèptes de la loi. Retournez au sein les „ uns des autres, & vous embrassez étroitement. „ Chassez de vôtre cœur toute sorte de haine, & „ vous reconnoissez pour freres, L'amitié est „ quelquefois plus tendre & plus sincére aprés la „ réconciliation, qu'elle n'avoit été avant la rup- „ ture.

CHAPITRE LXXII.

Larmes de L'Empereur Voiage différé.

„ DE'LIVREZ-MOI de mes soins, & de mes „ inquiétudes, rendez-moi la beauté du „ jour & le repos de la nuit. Sans cela je ne pour- „ rois m'empécher de fondre en larmes, & de „ passer le reste de ma vie dans la douleur. Com- „ ment pourrois-je étre dans la joie, pendant que „ le peuple de Dieu, & que més chers conservi- „ teurs sont séparez les uns des autres par un per- „ nicieux schisme? Pour vous faire comprendre „ la grandeur de mon déplaisir, je vous dirai qu'é- „ tant arrivé depuis peu de tems à Niçomédie, j'a- „ vois resolu de partir incontinent aprés, pour „ aller en Orient. Comme j'étois sur mon départ, „ cette nouvelle me l'a fait différer, de peur que „ je ne visse de mes propres yeux, ce que j'ai peine „ à entendre raconter. Ouvrez-moi donc par vô- „ tre réconciliation le chemin que vous m'avez „ fermé par vos quéreles. Faites en sorte que je „ vous puisse voir, vous & les autres peuples ravis „ de joie, & rendre à Dieu des actions de graces „ pour vôtre bonne intelligence.

CHA-

CHAPITRE LXXIII.

Continuation des disputes.

Voila la lettre que cét Empereur tres-chéri de Dieu, écrivit pour tâcher de rétablir la paix dans l'Eglise. Comme celui, qui avoit été chargé de la porter, étoit un Evêque d'une rare piété, il n'ômit rien de ce qui pouvoit contribuer à l'accomplissement des volontez de l'Empereur. Mais l'affaire étoit trop importante pour être terminée par une lettre. L'aigreur des contestations s'augmenta, & se répandit par tout l'Orient par un effet de l'envie & de la malignité du démon, qui ne pouvoit souffrir la prospérité de l'Eglise.





LA VIE DE L'EMPEREUR CONSTANTIN,

Écrite par Eusébe Evêque de Césarée.

LIVRE TROISIÉME.

CHAPITRE PREMIER.

Comparaison de la piété de Constantin, & de l'impiété des Persécuteurs.

VOILA de quelle maniére le démon ennemi de tous les biens, regardant d'un œil d'envie la prospérité de l'Eglise, la remplit de trouble au tems auquel elle sembloit devoir joüir du plus profond calme, Cependant l'Empereur tres-chéri de Dieu s'appliqua avec une vigilance incroiable à tous ses devoirs, affecta de tenir une conduite toute contraire à celle des tirans qui l'avoient précédé, & vainquit tous ses ennemis. Ces tirans étant

étant éloignez du culte de Dieu, usérent de violences pour porter tout le monde à celui des Idoles. Constantin aiant fait voir tres-clairement par ses actions, & par ses paroles, que les Idòles ne sont point des dieux; exhorta tous les hommes à reconnoître le Dieu véritable. Les tirans eurent l'insolence de faire des railleries pleines de blasphémes du Christ de Dieu. Constantin protesta que c'étoit son défenseur, & se glorifia de suivre l'Etendart de sa croix. Les tirans persécutérent les serviteurs du Sauveur, & les chassérent de leurs païs, & de leurs maisons. Constantin les rappela de l'exil; & les rétablit en possession de leur état. Les tirans les notérent d'infamie. Constantin les combla d'honneurs. Les tirans les dépoüillérent de leurs biens. Constantin ne se contenta pas de les leur rendre, il y ajoûta ses bien-faits. Les tirans publiérent des Edits remplis de calomnies contre les pasteurs de l'Eglise. Constantin fit leur éloge. Les tirans démolirent & rasérent les lieux où les Chrétiens faisoient leurs priéres. Constantin augmenta ceux qu'il trouva entiers, & en éleva d'autres tout de neuf. Les tirans brûlérent les livres dictez par l'esprit de Dieu. Constantin emploia des sommes considérables pour en faire décrire un grand nombre de copies. Les tirans défendirent aux Evêques de s'assembler. Constantin les fit venir de diverses Provinces, les reçut jusques dans sa chambre, & les plaça à sa table. Les tirans firent des presens aux démons. Constantin en découvrit l'inutilité, & emploia à l'usage des hommes ce qui étoit perdu quand il étoit offert à ces esprits impurs. Les tirans ornérent les temples des démons. Constantin les démolit. Les tirans firent souffrir d'infames supplices aux serviteurs de Dieu. Constantin les vengea en châtiant leurs persécuteurs, & en honorant leur mémoire. Les tirans chassérent de leur palais les hommes consa-

crez

crez au culte de Dieu. Constantin se fia à eux plus qu'aux autres, parce qu'il étoit bien persuadé de leur probité. Les tirans brulérent d'une soif insatiable de l'argent, & en amassérent par de mauvais moyens, sans en joüir non plus que Tantale. Constantin ouvrit ses tresors, & les communiqua généreusement à tous les hommes. Les tirans tuérent des personnes innocentes à dessein de s'emparer de leur bien. Constantin ne souffrit jamais que les Juges se servissent pendant son régne de l'épée qu'ils avoient entre leurs mains. Il gouverna les Décurions, & les peuples de Provinces avec une douceur de Pere, plûtôt qu'avez une autorité de Prince. Quiconque considérera avec attention son régne, croira voir un siécle nouveau & une éclatante lumiére qui sort du sein des ténébres. Il reconnoîtra les traces du doit de Dieu, qui avoit suscité ce religieux Empereur, pour exterminer une multitude d'impies.

CHAPITRE II.

Piété de Constantin.

Les tirans n'aiant jamais eu de pareils, & leur insolence aiant commis contre l'Eglise des excez, dont l'antiquité n'avoit jamais produit d'exemple, Dieu a suscité Constantin comme un homme tout-à-fait rare, & a opéré par son ministére des merveilles, qui jusques alors avoient été inoüies & inconnuës. Quelle merveille plus surprenante que la vertu de ce Prince, dont la sagesse de Dieu a fait present aux hommes? Il a prêché hardiment le Christ de Dieu, & bien loin de rougir du nom de Chrétien, il en a fait le signe sur son front, & a porté l'Etendart de la croix à la tête de ses armées.

CHA-

CHAPITRE III.

Portrait de Constantin.

CONSTANTIN fit voir dans un tableau exposé au devant de son Palais le signe salutaire de la Croix peint au dessus de sa tête, & au dessous l'ennemi du genre humain, qui avoit combatu l'Eglise par les armes des tirans, representé sous la forme d'un dragon. L'Ecriture l'appele dragon & serpent qui se roule sur soi-même. L'Empereur fit representer en cire un dragon percé de traits, sous ses piez, & sous les piez des Princes ses enfans, & précipité ensuite au fond de la mer, pour désigner sous cette figure l'ennemi du genre humain, qui par la force de la Croix, dont nôtre Prince portoit la figure sur la tête, avoit été précipité au fond de l'enfer. Voila ce que signifioit ce tableau. Pour moi j'admire la pénétration de l'Empereur, qui étant inspiré de l'Esprit de Dieu, a exprimé par cette peinture, ce qui avoit
Isaïe ch. 27. été prédit par les Prophétes, *que Dieu viendroit avec sa grande épée, son épée pénétrante & invincible pour punir ce serpent immense, ce serpent à divers plis & replis, & pour faire mourir le serpent qui est dans la mer.*

CHAPITRE IV.

Disputes émuës en Egypte par Arius.

LES troubles que la jalousie continuoit d'exciter dans Aléxandrie, & le schisme pernicieux qui divisoit les habitans de Thébes, & d'Egypte, causoient à ce religieux Empereur une cuisante inquiétude. Il n'y avoit point de Ville où les Evê-

ques ne s'élevassent contre les Evêques, & où les peuples ne s'armassent contre les peuples. Leur fureur alla si avant, que d'attaquer les statuës du Prince. Mais au lieu d'en entrer en colére, il n'en eut que de la douleur, & bien loin de vouloir châtier l'insolence de ceux qui avoient commis ce crime, il se contenta de déplorer leur aveuglement.

CHAPITRE V.

Différend touchant la célébration de la Fête de Pâques.

L'EGLISE étoit tourmentée dés-auparavant par une autre maladie. C'est ainsi que je parle du différend qui s'étoit émû touchant le jour auquel on doit célébrer la Fête de Pâques. Les uns soûtenoient qu'il faloit suivre la coûtume des Juifs. Les autres prétendoient au contraire qu'il faloit examiner tres-exactement le tems, & ne se pas acorder avec des peuples, qui en ce point-là même, étoient éloignez de la grace de l'Evangile. Il y avoit long-tems que les peuples étoient divisez sur ce sujet, & que la discipline de l'Eglise en étoit troublée, parce que pendant que les uns se mortifioient par les jeûnes, & par les austéritez de la pénitence, les autres célébroient la fête avec tous les témoignages possibles de joie. Personne ne pouvoit apporter de reméde à ce mal. Chaque parti étant d'un poids presqu'égal, la question demeuroit indécise. Il n'y avoit que Dieu qui la pût terminer, & il semble qu'il n'y avoit sur la terre que Constantin, de qui Dieu eût agréable de se servir pour cét effet. Quand il vit que la lettre qu'il avoit écrite à Aléxandrie, n'avoit pas eu le succez qu'il en avoit attendu, il chercha dans son esprit une autre maniére de combattre cét ennemi invisible, qui troubloit la paix de l'Eglise.

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CHAPITRE VI.

Convocation du Concile de Nicée.

Il leva contre lui une armée celeste, en écrivant de tous côtez aux Evêques pour les assembler dans un Concile. Il ne se contenta pas de leur marquer le tems & le lieu de leur assemblée, il eut soin de pourvoir à la commodité de leur voiage, en fournissant aux uns des voitures publiques, & aux autres des bêtes pour porter leur équipage. Il choisit une Ville de Bithynie, qui sembloit d'autant plus propre à les recevoir qu'elle portoit le nom de la victoire. Les Evêques n'eurent pas plûtôt reçu ses lettres, qu'ils partirent avec une ardeur & une joie nompareille, dans l'espérance de voir la bonne intelligence rétablie entre eux, & de considérer le religieux Prince, dont ils avoient entendu dire des choses si merveilleuses. Quand tant de Prêtres si éloignez par la distance des lieux, & encore plus par la diversité de leurs sentimens & de leurs inclinations furent dans le même lieu, il parut tres-clairement que leur convocation étoit un ouvrage de la main de Dieu.

CHAPITRE VII.

Description de l'assemblée.

Ceux qui tenoient le premier rang parmi les Ministres des Eglises de l'Europe, de l'Afrique & de l'Asie se trouvérent à cette assemblée. Le lieu où les Fidéles avoient accoûtumé de faire leurs priéres, fut alors augmenté comme par un ordre de Dieu pour recevoir des Prêtres & des Evê-

Evêques de Syrie, de Cilicie, de Phénicie, d'Arabie, de Palestine, d'Egypte, de Thébes, de Libye, & de Mésopotamie. On y en vit un de Perse, & un de Scythie. Le Pont, la Galatie, la Pamphylie, la Cappadoce, l'Asie, la Phrygie fournirent la fleur de leurs Pasteurs. La Thrace, la Macédoine, l'Achaïe, l'Epire & d'autres Provinces plus éloignées, y envoiérent les plus célébres de leur Clergé. Un fameux Evêque d'Espagne, s'y trouva parmi les autres. L'Evêque de la Ville Impériale y manqua à-cause de son grand âge, mais ses Légats y remplirent sa place. Constantin fut le premier des Empereurs, qui fit une assemblée d'Evêques semblable à celle des Apôtres, & qui en forma comme une couronne qu'il offrit au Sauveur, en réconnoissance des victoires qu'il avoit remportées avec son assistance.

CHAPITRE VIII.

Suite de la même description.

On dit qu'au tems des Apôtres, il y eut dans Jérusalem des personnes religieuses de toutes les nations qui étoient soûs le ciel, *Parthes, Médes, Elamites, ceux qui habitent la Mésopotamie, la Judée, la Cappadoce, le Pont, l'Asie, la Phrygie, la Pamphylie, l'Egypte, & la Libye, qui est proche de Cyréne, & ceux qui étoient venus de Rome, Juifs ou Prosélytes, Crétois, & Arabes.* Mais parmi ces personnes-là, il y en avoit qui n'étoient pas consacrées au service de Dieu, ni élevées à l'honneur du Sacerdoce, au lieu que dans ce Concile, il y avoit plus de deux cens cinquante Evêques, & un nombre presqu'innombrable de Prêtres, de Diacres, d'Acolythes, & d'autres qui étoient venus avec eux.

Aux Actes ch. 2.

CHAPITRE IX.

Rares qualitez des deux cens cinquante Evêques du Concile de Nicée.

PARMI ces sacrez Ministres de Dieu, il y en avoit qui excelloient par le don d'une éloquence celeste, les autres par la gravité de leurs mœurs, & la fermeté de leurs patience, les autres par leur modestie & leur douceur. Quelques-uns attiroient le respect par leur grand âge; & quelques autres excitoient l'admiration par la vigueur de leur jeunesse, & la vivacité de leur esprit. Il y en avoit qui avoient été admis depuis fort-peu de tems dans le sacré ministére. L'Empereur leur faisoit fournir chaque jour des vivres en abondance.

CHAPITRE X.

Séance du Concile. Entrée de l'Empereur.

TOUS ceux qui composoient le Concile s'étant trouvez au jour qui avoit été choisi pour décider les questions, ils entrérent dans la grande sale du Palais, & s'assirent selon leur rang sur des siéges qui leur avoient été préparez. Ils demeurérent dans un grave & modeste silence, en attendant l'arrivée de l'Empereur. Incontinent aprés, trois de ses parens entrérent l'un aprés l'autre. On vit paroître ensuite non ses Gardes, selon la coûtume, mais ceux seulement de sa Cour, qui faisoient profession de nôtre Religion. Dés que l'on entendit le signal qui avertit de son arrivée, tous les Evêques se levérent, & à l'heure-même il entra au

au milieu d'une troupe de personnes de qualité, & parut comme un Ange de Dieu. Il éblouïssoit les yeux par l'éclat de sa pourpre, & par la splendeur de l'or, & des pierreries dont elle étoit relevée. Voila quels étoient des ornemens extérieurs. Pour ce qui est des intérieurs; il paroissoit tres-clairement par la modestie, avec laquelle il tenoit les yeux baissez, par l'honnête pudeur qui se faisoit remarquer sur son visage, par son mouvement & sa démarchè, par l'avantage de sa taille, par sa bonne mine, par sa constitution forte & robuste, que son ame avoit des vertus, dont l'excellence ne peut étre assez relęvée par tous les éloges qu'on en pourroit faire. Lorsqu'il fut arrivé au haut des siéges, il s'arrêta. Quand on lui eut apporté un siége bas, qui étoit d'or, & que les Evêques lui eurent fait signe de s'asseoir, il s'assit, & ils s'assirent aprés, eux-mêmes.

CHAPITE XI.

Silence du Concile.

L'Evêque qui remplissoit la premiére place du côté droit s'étant levé fit un petit discours pour remercier Dieu des graces qu'il avoit accordées à l'Empereur. Quand il eut achevé de parler, & qu'il se fut assis, toute l'assemblée demeura dans le silence, tenant la vûë fixement attachée sur ce Prince. Alors il les regarda tous d'un air gai & agréable, & s'étant un peu recuëilli, il prononça d'un ton doux & modéré la harangue qui suit.

CHAPITRE XII.

Harangue de Constantin sur la Paix de l'Eglise.

„ Je n'ai jamais rien souhaité avec tant de passion „ que de vous voir assemblez dans un même lieu. „ Je remercie Dieu de m'avoir accordé cette grace „ aprés tant d'autres, non seulement de vous voir „ assemblez dans un même lieu, mais de vous voir „ réunis dans un même sentiment : que l'heureux „ état de nos affaires ne soit donc plus troublé par „ la malignité de l'ennemi, & depuis que l'injuste „ domination de ceux qui avoient eu l'insolence „ de déclarer la guerre à Dieu a été détruite par le „ secours du Sauveur, que la jalousie du démon „ ne trouve point d'autre moien de noircir l'inno- „ cence de nôtre Religion par de fausses accusa- „ tions. Les contéstations qui se sont élevées dans „ l'Eglise m'ont paru plus dangereuses que les „ guerres qui ont été excitées dans l'Etat, & m'ont „ touché plus sensiblement qu'aucune affaire tem- „ porelle : Lorsque par l'aide de Dieu j'eus rem- „ porté la victoire sur mes ennemis, je croiois „ qu'il ne me restoit plus rien à faire que de l'en „ remercier, & de me réjouïr avec ceux qu'il „ avoit délivrez par mon moien, de la servitude. „ Mais dés que j'appris les différens que vous aviez „ les uns avec les autres, bien loin de les négliger „ je jugeai que j'étois obligé d'y apporter le remé- „ de, & donnai les ordres nécessaires pour la con- „ vocation du Concile. Vôtre presence me cause „ une satisfaction incroiable. Mais ma joie ne sera „ point entiére jusques à ce que vous n'aiez plus „ qu'un esprit, & que la parfaite intelligence que „ vôtre condition vous oblige de prêcher aux au- „ tres, soit solidement établie parmi vous. Fai-

„ tes

„ tes donc en sorte, chers Ministres de Dieu, fidé-
„ les serviteurs du Maître & du Sauveur commun
„ de tous les hommes, que vos contestations ces-
„ sent absolument. Vous ne sauriez rien faire de
„ si agréable à Dieu, ni que je tienne à si grand
„ avantage.

CHAPITRE XIII.

Constantin met les Evêques d'accord.

CONSTANTIN aiant parlé de la sorte en Latin, & un Interpréte l'aiant expliqué en Grec, il permit aux Présidens du Concile de dire ce qu'il leur plairoit. Alors les uns commencérent à former des accusations, les autres à y répondre, & à faire aussi des plaintes. Ces contestations-là aiant excité un grand bruit, l'Empereur écouta avec une extréme patience tout ce qui fut avancé par les partis différens, expliqua quelque-fois leurs raisons, & enfin les mit d'accord. Il leur parla en Grec, dont il avoit quelque connoissance, loüa les uns, convainquit les autres par la force de ses raisons, & fléchit les autres par la douceur de ses remontrances, jusques à ce qu'il eut terminé leurs différens, & appaisé leurs quéreles.

CHAPITRE XIV.

Conclusion du Concile.

NON seulement les Evêques s'accordérent touchant la foi, mais aussi ils convinrent du jour auquel ils célébreroient la Fête de Pâques. Les décisions de l'assemblée furent rédigées par écrit & signées de tout le monde. Constantin regarda l'heu-

l'heureuse conclusion de ce Concile comme une célébre victoire qu'il avoit remportée sur l'ennemi de l'Eglise, & en rendit à Dieu de publiques actions de graces.

CHAPITRE XV.

L'Empereur fait un festin aux Evêques.

La vintiéme année du régne de Constantin étant presqu'écoulée au même tems, on fit des réjoüissances dans les Provinces, & ce Prince fit aux Evêques qu'il avoit réconciliez, un magnifique festin, qui fut comme un agréable Sacrifice qu'il offrit à Dieu par leur ministére. Aucun Evêque ne manqua de s'y trouver. L'ordre en fut plus admirable qu'on ne sauroit dire. Les hommes de Dieu passérent sans crainte au milieu des Compagnies des Gardes, qui étoient debout l'épée nuë à la main à l'entrée du Palais. Les uns se virent à la table de l'Empereur, & les autres à des tables séparées. C'étoit sans doute une image du Roiaume de Jesus Christ, & il sembloit que ce fut un songe.

CHAPITRE XVI.

Presens faits aux Evêques.

Lorsque le festin fut achevé Constantin parla aux Evêques avec beaucoup de civilité, & leur fit à tous des presens selon leur dignité, & leur mérite. Il écrivit ce qui s'étoit passé dans le Concile, à ceux qui n'avoient pû y assister. Je croi devoir insérer ici sa lettre. La voici.

CHA-



CHAPITRE XVII.

Lettre de Constantin aux Eglises, touchant le Concile de Nicée.

Constantin Auguste aux Eglises.

» LA prospérité dont nous joüissons, m'aiant
» fait reconnoître tres-clairement la grandeur
» de la bonté de Dieu envers nous, j'ai crû que le
» principal soin que je devois prendre étoit de fai-
» re en sorte que les enfans bien-heureux de l'E-
» glise Catholique fussent unis par le lien d'une
» même foi, d'une charité sincére, & d'une pié-
» té uniforme envers Dieu. Mais parce qu'il n'y
» avoit point de moien si convenable pour s'assu-
» rer de la possession d'un si grand bien, que de
» faire examiner les matiéres de la Religion par
» tous les Evêques, ou au moins par le plus grand
» nombre, j'en ai assemblé le plus grand qu'il m'a
» été possible, & j'ai assisté à leur assemblée com-
» me un d'entre vous. Car je n'ai garde de dissi-
» muler le sujet de ma joie qui est que je suis com-
» me vous, & avec vous, serviteur de Jesus Christ.
» Tous les points contestez ont été examinez tres-
» exactement, jusques à ce que la doctrine qui plait
» à Dieu, qui tend à la réünion des esprits, & qui
» ne laisse pas le moindre sujet de division, ait été
» tres-clairement reconnuë.

CHAPITRE XVIII.

De la célébration de la Fête de Pâques.

„ La question qui regarde la célébration de „ la Fête de Pâques aiant été ensuite agitée, „ on a jugé tout d'une voix qu'il étoit fort à pro„ pos qu'elle fût célébrée au même jour dans tou„ te l'étenduë de l'Eglise. Que pouvons-nous „ faire de plus conforme à la bien-séance, & à „ l'honnêteté, que d'observer tous de la même „ sorte, cette Fête où nous avons tous reçu l'es„ pérance de l'immortalité? On a jugé que ç'au„ roit été une pratique indigne de la sainteté de „ l'Eglise, de la solenniser selon la coûtume des „ Juifs, qui ont les mains soüillées, & l'esprit „ aveuglé par leurs crimes. Nous pouvons rejet„ ter leur usage, & en faire passer aux siécles à „ venir un plus raisonnable, que nous avons sui„ vi depuis le premier jour de la passion jusques„ ici. N'aions donc rien de commun avec la na„ tion des Juifs, qui est une nation ennemie: „ nous avons appris du Sauveur une autre voie, & „ on tient une autre route dans nôtre sainte Reli„ gion. Demeurons-y tous, mes tres-chers fre„ res, & nous éloignons d'une société aussi infa„ me qu'est celle de ce peuple. Il n'y a rien si ri„ dicule que la vanité avec laquelle ils se vantent, „ que nous ne saurions célébrer cette Fête com„ me il faut, si nous n'en apprenons la méthode „ dans leur école. Que peuvent savoir des hom„ mes qui depuis qu'ils se sont rendus coûpables „ de la mort du Seigneur, ne se conduisent plus „ par la lumiére de la raison, mais sont emportez „ par la fureur de leurs passions? Ils sont si éloi„ gnez en ce point-là-même, de la vérité, qu'il

arrive

„ arrive souvent qu'ils célébrent deux-fois dans la „ même année, la Fête de Paques. Quel sujet „ aurions-nous de suivre leur égarement ? Car ja- „ mais nous ne consentirons de célébrer deux-fois „ la Fête dans la même année ? Mais quand nous „ n'aurions pas toutes les raisons que je viens de „ dire, la prudence ne laisseroit pas de vous obli- „ ger à souhaiter, que la pureté de vôtre consien- „ ce ne fût salie par l'observation d'aucune coûtu- „ me qui ait rapport à celles d'une aussi méchante „ nation qu'est celle des Juifs. Il faut de plus con- „ sidérer qu'il n'est nullement permis qu'il y ait „ des usages, & des pratiques différentes dans un „ point de discipline aussi important qu'est celui- „ là. Le Sauveur ne nous a laissé qu'un jour de sa „ délivrance, qui est le jour de sa passion. Il a „ voulu qu'il n'y eût qu'une Eglise Catholique „ dont les membres, bien que répandus en divers „ lieux, ne laissent pas d'être mûs par le même es- „ prit, & conduits par la même volonté de Dieu. „ Que vôtre sainteté considére avec sa sagesse or- „ dinaire combien ce seroit une chose fâcheuse, „ & contraire à la bien-séance, qu'au même jour „ les uns gardassent le jeûne, & les autres fissent „ des festins. Le dessein de la Divine Providence „ est que cette diversité de discipline soit abolie, „ & que l'uniformité soit introduite, comme je „ me persuade que vous le reconnoissez de vous- „ mêmes.

CHAPITRE XIX.

Exhortation à l'uniformité de la discipline.

„ CET abus devant être corrigé afin que nous „ n'eussions plus rien de commun avec les „ parricides qui ont fait mourir nôtre Maître, & „ la coûtume observée par toutes les Eglises de „ Midi, de Septentrion, & d'Occident, & par „ quelques-unes même d'Orient, étant tres-rai- „ sonnable, tous ont jugé qu'elle devoit être gé- „ néralement reçuë, & j'ai promis que vous-vous „ y soûmettriez. Embrassez-donc volontaire- „ ment l'usage qui est établi à Rome, en Italie, „ en Afrique, en Egypte, en Espagne, en Gau- „ le, en Angleterre, en Achaïe, dans le Diocé- „ se d'Asie, & de Pont, & en Cilicie. Considé- „ rez non seulement que le nombre de ces Eglises „ est plus grand que celui des autres; mais enco- „ re que leur usage est appuié sur de solides rai- „ sons, & que nous ne devons avoir rien de com- „ mun avec le parjure des Juifs. Je vous dirai „ pour emploier moins de paroles, que tous les „ Evêques ont été d'avis de célébrer la Fête de „ Pâques au même jour. Il ne doit point y avoir „ de différentes pratiques dans une grande solen- „ nité, & le plus seur est de suivre l'usage qui est „ le plus éloigné de la société, de l'erreur, & du „ crime.

CHAPITRE XX.

Exhortation à la soûmission au Concile.

» OBEÏSSEZ avec joie à cét ordre. Car ce qui est ordonné par les saints Evêques dans » les Conciles, n'est ordonné que par la volonté » de Dieu. Lorsque vous aurez fait savoir à nos » tres-chers freres ce que je vous écrits, vous re- » soudrez ensemble d'observer la tres-sainte Fête de Pâques au même jour, afin que quand je vous » irai trouver, comme je le souhaite avec passion » depuis long-tems, je la puisse célébrer avec » vous, & me rejoüir de ce que la cruauté du Dia- » ble a été surmontée par la Puissance de Dieu, & de ce que la paix, & la vérité régnent par tout » avec les fidéles. Je prie Dieu, mes tres-chers » freres, qu'il vous conserve.

L'Empereur envoia dans les Provinces plusieurs copies de cette Lettre pour y faire voir comme dans un miroir sa piété envers Dieu, & son zelé envers l'Eglise.

CHAPITRE XXI.

Constantin renvoie les Evêques à leurs Eglises, & leur donne de tres-bons avis.

LES Evêques étant sur le point de se séparer, l'Empereur les manda tous au même jour pour prendre congé d'eux, les exhotta à entretenir la paix, & à éviter les disputes où il y de l'aigreur, à n'avoir point de jalousie contre ceux qui s'élévent au dessus des autres, ou par l'éminence de

de leur doctrine, ou par la grandeur de leur éloquence; mais à considérer ces bonnes qualitez comme le bien commun du même corps. Il exhorta aussi ceux qui surpassoient les autres, à ne les point mépriser, leur representant qu'il n'appartient proprement qu'à Dieu de juger du mérite, & de la vertu de chacun. Qu'il faut avoir d'autant plus de compassion pour les imparfaits que la perfection est plus rare. Qu'ils devoient se pardonner réciproquement de légéres fautes, & prendre tout le soin possible pour conserver la paix entre eux, de peur que la chaleur de leurs contestations ne fût un sujet de raillerie pour ceux qui ne cherchent que l'occasion de décréditer la loi de Dieu. Que cependant il seroit aisé de sauver ces personnes-là en leur donnant de l'estime, & de l'admiration pour les pratiques qui sont observées parmi nous. Qu'ils ne doutoient pas qu'il n'y eût beaucoup de personnes à qui l'éloquence ne sert de rien, que plusieurs souhaitent seulement de recevoir ce qui leur est nécessaire pour leur subsistance, d'autres sont bien-aises d'être reçus & traitez civilement, d'autres n'aiment que ceux qui leur font des presens. Enfin il y en a fort peu qui écoutent volontiers les avis les plus salutaires, & qui cherchent sincérement la vérité. Ces raisons obligent de condêcendre à la foiblesse de ceux avec lesquels on est obligé de vivre, de leur fournir comme un sage Médecin ce qui leur est propre; afin que la doctrine du salut soit généralement respectée. L'Empereur leur aiant representé d'abord toutes ces choses, les conjura de prier Dieu pour lui, & leur accorda la permission de s'en retourner, ce qu'ils firent avec beaucoup de joie. La doctrine qui avoit été arrêtée en presence de ce Prince, & du commun consentement de tous les Evêques fut généralement approuvée, & ceux qui s'étoient autrefois divisez se réjoignirent, pour ne plus faire qu'un seul corps.

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CHAPITRE XXII.

Libéralité de Constantin.

L'Empereur étant tout rempli de la joie que lui donnoit l'heureux succez de l'assemblée des Evêques, écrivit comme je l'ai dit à ceux qui n'avoient pû s'y trouver, afin de leur faire part des mêmes sentimens. Il commanda de distribuer de grandes sommes aux habitans des Villes, & de la campagne, & célébra les jeux accoûtumez pour la vintiéme année de son régne.

CHAPITRE XXIII.

Constantin écrit aux Egyptiens.

Pendant que les Eglises du reste du monde joüissoient d'un profond calme, celles d'Egypte étoient battuës de la tempête. La violence avec laquelle elle s'agitoient, apportoit de la tristesse à Constantin, sans toutefois exciter son indignation. Il envoia quérir les Evêques de ce païs, & les aiant reçus avec respect comme ses peres, & comme les Prophétes de Dieu, il s'entremit de les accorder, & leur fit des presens. Il leur écrivit depuis au même sens auquel il leur avoit parlé, leur recommanda l'observation de ce qui avoit été ordonné dans le Concile, & les exhorta à garder entre eux la concorde en vuë des jugemens de Dieu.

CHAPITRE XXIV.

Du soin que Constantin eut d'écrire d'autres Lettres aux Evêques, & aux Peuples.

CONSTANTIN écrivit un grand nombre de pareilles Lettres soit aux Evêques pour leur representer les besoins de l'Eglise, ou aux peuples fidéles qu'il appeloit ses freres & ses conserviteurs, pour les exciter à leur devoir. Je n'en dirai rien ici davantage de peur d'interrompre le cours de mon Histoire. Peut-être que j'en parlerai plus amplement dans un Livre à part.

CHAPITRE XXV.

Constantin ordonne de bâtir une Eglise à Jérusalem.

CET Empereur tres-chéri de Dieu entreprit ensuite un excellent ouvrage en Palestine. Il jugea qu'il étoit de son devoir de rendre le lieu, où le Sauveur resuscita dans Jérusalem, le lieu le plus célébre, & le plus vénérable qu'il y eût au reste du monde, & pour cét effet il ordonna par un mouvement de l'esprit de Dieu, que l'on y élevât une Eglise.

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CHAPITRE XXVI.

Tombeau du Sauveur couvert de pierres, & prophané par la statue de Venus.

IL y avoit long-tems que les impies, ou plûtôt que les démons qui se servoient de leurs mains, avoient tâché d'abolir le Monument d'où un Ange décendu du Ciel & tout éclatant de lumiére, avoit roulé une pierre, & avoit en même-tems levé la pierre de l'incrédulité de dessus les cœurs durs & insensibles de ceux qui croioient que le Sauveur étoit encore couché parmi les morts, quand il apprit aux femmes l'heureuse nouvelle de sa resurrection. Ces impies & ces prophanes s'étoient follement imaginé qu'ils enseveliroient la vérité de ce Mystére sous le même amas de terres & de matiéres dont ils combleroient ce sacré Tombeau. Y en aiant donc apporté une prodigieuse quantité, ils pavérent la surface, & élevérent au dessus un Tombeau, propre à recevoir non les corps mais les ames. C'est ainsi que je parle d'une obscure caverne qu'ils bâtirent en l'honneur du Démon de l'impureté, sous le nom de Venus. Ils y offrirent depuis d'exécrables sacrifices. Ces misérables n'avoient pas assez le sens pour juger qu'il n'étoit pas possible, que celui qui avoit triomphé de la mort, ne découvrît pas leur dessein; non plus qu'il n'est pas possible que le Soleil tourne dans le Ciel, & que l'on ne voie pas ses raions de dessus la terre. La puissance du Sauveur avoit déja rempli la terre de son éclat, bien qu'elle éclairât les esprits au lieu, que le Soleil n'éclaire que les corps. Cependant les desseins que les prophanes & les impies ont faits contre

contre la vérité ont réüssi durant quelque-tems, & il ne s'est trouvé ni Gouverneur de Province, ni Général d'armée, ni Empereur; enfin il ne s'est trouvé que le seul Constantin qui ait été capable de lever ce scandale, & d'abolir cette abomination. Ce Prince si agréable à Dieu, & si fort rempli de son esprit, ne pouvant souffrir sans une extréme indignation qu'un lieu si saint eût été couvert d'ordures, & comme enseveli dans l'oubli par un effet de l'artifice des ennemis de la foi, commanda de le nettoier, à dessein de le rendre le plus éclatant & le plus magnifique qu'il y eût sous le Soleil. Il n'eut pas si-tôt donné cét ordre, que les édifices que la tromperie avoit élevez, & que la superstition avoit consacrez au culte des démons furent rasez, & que ce culte fut aboli.

CHAPITRE XXVII.

L'Empereur fait emporter les démolitions du Temple de Venus.

L'EMPEREUR ne se contenta pas d'avoir abbatu le Temple de l'Idole de l'impureté. Il en fit jetter fort loin les démolitions, & commanda même de creuser la terre qui avoit été foüillée par l'impiété des sacrifices, & de la porter ailleurs.

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CHAPITRE XXVIII.

Découverte du Tombeau du Sauveur.

CES ordres n'eurent pas été si-tôt exécutez, & on n'eut pas si-tôt creusé jusques à l'ancienne hauteur de la terre, que l'on vit, contre toute sorte d'attente, le tres-saint & tres-auguste Tombeau d'où le Sauveur étoit autrefois ressuscité; & on admira dans la découverte de ce Sanctuaire, la plus fidéle & la plus vive Image que l'on eût jamais pû desirer, du mystére de sa glorieuse Resurrection.

CHAPITRE XXIX.

Ordres donnez pour bâtir une Eglise.

CONSTANTIN donna à l'heure-même les ordres nécessaires pour bâtir une magnifique Eglise proche du lieu où étoit le saint Sépulcre, & ordonna aux Gouverneurs des Provinces de fournir les sommes dont on auroit besoin pour cét effet. Il écrivit pour le même sujet à l'Evêque de Jérusalem, & appuïa fortement par sa lettre la doctrine de la foi.

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CHAPITRE XXX.

Lettre de l'Empereur Constantin à Macaire, pour la construction d'une Eglise en l'honneur de la mort du Sauveur.

Constantin Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste : A Macaire.

» LA grace que le Sauveur nous fait est si extra» ordinaire & si admirable, qu'il n'y a point » de paroles qui la puissent dignement exprimer. » En effet qu'y-a-t'il de si admirable que l'ordre » de sa Providence, par lequel il a caché sous » terre durant un si long espace de tems, le mo» nument de sa Passion, jusques à ce que l'ennemi » de la pieté eût été vaincu, & que ses serviteurs » eussent été mis en liberté ? Il me semble que » quand on assembleroit tout ce qu'il y a de Savans » & d'Orateurs dans le monde, ils ne pourroient » jamais rien dire qui approchât de la gran» deur de ce miracle, parce qu'il est autant au » dessus de toute créance, que la sagesse éternelle » est au dessus de la raison. C'est pourquoi je me » propose d'exciter tous les Peuples à embrasser » la Religion avec une ardeur égale à l'éclat des » évenemens merveilleux, par lesquels la vérité » de la foi est confirmée de jour en jour. Je ne dou» te point que comme ce dessein-là que j'ai, est » connu de tout le monde, vous ne soyez tres» persuadé que je n'ai point de plus forte passion » que d'embellir par de magnifiques bâtimens ce » lieu qui étant déja saint, a été encore sanctifié » par les marques de la passion du Sauveur, & qui a été

„ a été déchargé par la volonté de Dieu, & par „ mes soins, du poids d'une idole dont il avoit été „ chargé.

CHAPITRE XXXI.

Dessein magnifique de cette Eglise.

„ JE remets à vôtre prudence de prendre les „ soins nécessaires, pour faire en sorte que les „ édifices surpassent en grandeur & en beauté, „ tout ce qu'il y a de beau, & de grand au reste „ du monde. J'ai donné charge à nôtre tres-cher „ Dracilien, Vicaire des préfets du Prétoire & „ Gouverneur de la Province, d'emploier sui- „ vant vos ordres les plus excellens Ouvriers à éle- „ ver les murailles. Mandez-moi quels marbres, „ & quelles colonnes vous desirez, afin que je les „ fasse conduire.

CHAPITRE XXXII.

Beauté du lambris.

„ JE serai bien-aise de savoir si vous jugez que „ l'Eglise doive étre lambrissée, ou non. Car „ si elle doit étre lambrissée on y pourra mettre de „ l'or. Faites savoir au plûtôt aux Officiers que je „ vous ai nommez, le nombre des Ouvriers, & „ les sommes d'argent qui seront nécessaires, & les „ marbres, les colonnes, & les ornemens qui seront „ les plus beaux, & les plus riches, afin que j'en „ sois promtement informé. Je prie Dieu, mon „ tres-cher frere, qu'il vous conserve.

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CHAPITRE XXXIII.

Construction de l'Eglise.

LE projet contenu dans cette lettre fut suivi d'une promte exécution, & on éleva incontinent aprés proche du Sépulcre du Sauveur une nouvelle Jérusalem, vis-à-vis du lieu où avoit été autrefois l'ancienne, dont Dieu avoit permis la ruine en haine de l'impiété de ses habitans. L'Empereur éleva contre elle un trophée pour conserver la mémoire de la victoire remportée par le Sauveur sur la mort, que cette Ville sacrilége lui avoit fait souffrir. Cette Eglise bâtie par Constantin est peut-étre la nouvelle Jérusalem prédite par les Prophétes, & honorée du témoignage des livres saints. Le Tombeau proche duquel l'Ange avoit autrefois annoncé le mystére de la Resurrection fut avant toutes choses enrichi de divers ornemens.

CHAPITRE XXXIV.

Description du saint Sépulcre.

LA magnificence de l'Empereur parut d'abord dans la beauté des colonnes & des autres ornemens dont il fit embellir le Monument de la Resurrection de nôtre Maître.

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CHAPITRE XXXV.

Description des galeries.

On alloit de ce Tombeau à une place de vaste étenduë, pavée de belles pierres, & embellie de trois galeries élevées des trois côtez.

CHAPITRE XXXVI.

Description des murailles, & de la couverture de l'Eglise.

L'EGLISE fut bâtie au côté opposé au Tombeau, & exposé à l'Orient. C'est un ouvrage admirable pour sa hauteur, sa longueur, & sa largeur. Le dedans étoit revêtu de marbre de diverses couleurs, & le dehors paré de pierres si polies, & si bien jointes, qu'elles ne cédoient guéres au marbre en beauté. Le comble fut couvert de plomb, afin qu'il resistât plus aisément aux pluïes de l'hiver. Le dedans fut lambrissé de menuiserie, & le lambris couvert d'un or qui jettoit un merveilleux éclat dans toute l'Eglise.

CHAPITRE XXXVII.

Description de deux galeries, & de trois portes.

IL y avoit aux deux côtez de l'Eglise deux galeries, une basse & une haute, de même longueur que l'Eglise même, dont le dedans de la couverture étoit lambrissé & doré comme le reste. A l'endroit

l'endroit du portail, & au dehors elles étoient soûtenuës de hautes colonnes, & au dedans elles n'étoient appuïées que sur des bases quarrées, embellies de quantité d'ornemens. Il y avoit trois portes du côté d'Orient.

CHAPITRE XXXVIII.

Description du demi-cylindre au dessous duquel étoit l'Autel.

VIS-A-VIS de ces trois portes étoit comme un hemisphére qui est la partie principale de tout l'édifice. Il étoit entouré d'autant de colonnes qu'il y a d'Apôtres. Au haut de chaque colonne il y avoit de grandes corbeilles d'argent, que l'Empereur avoit données en l'honneur de ces douze Saints, & qu'il avoit consacrées à Dieu.

CHAPITRE XXXIX.

Description de l'entrée & du vestibule.

EN sortant de l'Eglise on trouvoit une grande place, aux deux côtez de laquelle il y avoit deux galeries, & au bout, la porte de la place, qui répondoit sur une autre place beaucoup plus grande où se tenoit le marché, & d'où l'on découvroit avec admiration la beauté de tous ces bâtimens.

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CHAPITRE XL.

Multitude de presens faits à cette Eglise par l'Empereur.

CETTE Eglise si magnifique aiant été élevée pour servir de Monument de la Resurrection glorieuse du Sauveur, elle fut embellie de presens d'or, d'argent, & de pierres précieuses, dont je n'ai pas le loisir de décrire ici la multitude ni la beauté.

CHAPITRE XLI.

Construction de deux autres Eglises.

L'EMPEREUR entreprit d'embellir deux autres lieux, qui avoient été consacrez par l'accomplissement de deux grands mystéres. Le premier étoit la grôte où le Divin Sauveur eût la bonté de se revêtir d'une chair mortelle, & de se rendre visible aux hommes. Le second étoit la montagne d'où il s'éleva au Ciel. Constantin rendit le nom d'Heléne sa mere fort célébre, par la magnificence des bâtimens, dont il consentit qu'elle ornât du fond du Tresor Impérial, les deux lieux dont je parle.

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CHAPITRE XLII.

Voiage d'Heléne à Béthléem.

CETTE Impératrice, dont la prudence étoit tout-à-fait singuliére, aiant resolu de rendre à Dieu comme au souverain de tous les Princes, l'humble hommage de ses priéres, & de lui donner des marques de la reconnoissance qu'elle avoit, de tant de faveurs dont il avoit comblé l'Empereur Constantin, & les Césars ses fils, elle alla avec une merveilleuse ardeur dans un âge fort avancé visiter les saints lieux, & pourvût en passant aux besoins des Provinces, & des Villes d'Orient. Elle rendit à Dieu ses respects au lieu qui avoit été consacré par la presence de son fils, selon ce que le Prophéte l'avoit prédit par ces paroles, *Nous entrerons dans son Temple : Nous-nous prosternerons au lieu qui lui sert de marchepié* : Et elle reçut bien-tôt aprés la récompense de sa piété.

Psea. 131.

CHAPITRE XLIII.

Description des deux Eglises de Béthléem.

CETTE religieuse Princesse ne se contenta pas d'avoir presenté à Dieu dans les saints lieux le tribut de son adoration, & de son culte. Elle éleva deux Eglises en son honneur, l'une proche de la grôte au lieu où le Sauveur étoit né, & l'autre sur la montagne d'où il étoit monté au Ciel. Emmanuel, c'est-à-dire, Dieu avec nous, a bien voulu naître pour nous sur la terre, & le lieu où il est né a été appelé Béthléem par les Juifs.

Heléne

Heléne n'oublia rien de ce qu'elle pût faire pour honorer l'enfantement de la Vierge, & Constantin son fils desirant seconder sa pieté & sa magnificence envoia quantité de presens d'or, d'argent, & d'étofes précieuses au lieu où ce mystére avoit été accompli. La même Princesse fit élever un superbe édifice sur la montage des Olives en l'honneur de la triomphante Ascension de nôtre Sauveur. L'Histoire assûre que ce fût dans une grôte de cette montagne qu'il révéla les saints mystéres à ses Apôtres. L'Empereur embellit aussi ce lieu-là d'un grand nombre de presens. Aprés qu'Heléne, cette religieuse mere d'un religieux Empereur, eut avec le secours & la libéralité de ce Prince son fils laissé ces deux monumens de sa devotion envers le Sauveur proche de ces deux grôtes qu'il avoit autrefois consacrées par sa presence, & par l'accomplissement des plus saints mystéres de nôtre salut, elle reçut bien-tôt la récompense de ses bonnes œuvres. Elle fut heureuse dans toute sa vie & jusques à une extréme vieillesse. Elle fit paroître dans sa bouche & dans ses mains de dignes fruits de sa vertu, elle conserva une parfaite vigueur de corps & d'esprit, eut une fin dont le bon-heur répondoit parfaitement à la pureté de ses mœurs, & reçut dés cette vie le commencement de sa récompense.

CHAPITRE XLIV.

Grandeur de courage & libéralité d'Heléne.

En traversant l'Orient elle fit des largesses extraordinaires aux communautez & aux particuliers, aux Officiers de l'Armée, & aux Soldats. Elle subvint généreusement aux besoins de toute sorte de personnes donnant de l'argent aux uns, des

des habits aux autres; délivrant ceux-là de prison, & tirans ceux-ci des métaux; rappelant quelques-uns des lieux où ils avoient été exilez, & protegeant les foibles contre les Puissans qui les vouloient opprimer.

CHAPITRE XLV.

Eloge de la piété d'Heléne.

L'APPLICATION avec laquelle elle exerçoit ces œuvres de charité, ne l'empêcha pas de s'aquitter tres-exactement des devoirs de sa pieté envers Dieu. Elle alloit tres-assidûment aux Eglises, les paroit de divers ornemens, & ne négligeoit pas la moindre Chapelle des petites Villes. C'étoit une chose merveilleuse de la voir au milieu du peuple avec un habit simple & modeste dans tous les exercices de la Religion Chrétienne.

CHAPITRE XLVI.

Testament d'Heléne, & sa mort.

LORS QU'APRE'S une longue suite d'années Dieu eut agréable de l'appeler à un état plus heureux, elle fit à l'âge de quatre-vints-ans son Testament, & laissa heritiers Constantin son fils l'Empereur de l'Univers, & les Césars ses petis-fils, ausquels elle partagea les biens qu'elle possédoit en diverses parties du monde. Elle mourut bien-tôt aprés en presence de l'Empereur qui lui rendit toute sorte de devoirs en cette derniére occasion, l'embrassant, & lui tenant les mains. Ceux qui jugeoient sainement en cette occasion regardoient sa mort, comme un passage d'une vie mor-
telle

telle & misérable, à une vie immortelle, & bienheureuse. Son ame étant donc parvenuë à un état incorruptible & spirituel comme celui des Anges, fut élevée à son Sauveur.

CHAPITRE XLVII.

Funérailles d'Heléne. Respect que Constantin avoit eu pour elle, pendant toute sa vie.

On lui rendit de grands honneurs aprés sa mort. Son corps fut porté au milieu des Gardes à la Ville impériale, & mis dans le tombeau des Empereurs. Ainsi mourut cette Princesse, qui pour avoir fait tant d'actions de piété, & avoir donné au monde un aussi grand Empereur que Constantin, mérite de vivre éternellement dans la mémoire des hommes. Il n'y a presque point de circonstance dans sa vie, qui ne donne sujet de publier qu'il étoit heureux, mais il n'y a rien qui fournisse un fondement si raisonnable de le faire, que la tendresse & la déférence qu'il a toûjours euë pour l'Impératrice Heléne sa mere. Il l'instruisit si bien des maximes de nôtre Religion, dont elle n'avoit auparavant nulle connoissance, qu'il sembloit qu'elle les eût apprises de la bouche du Sauveur-même. Il lui fit rendre de si grands honneurs qu'il n'y avoit personne dans les Provinces, non pas même les gens de guerre, qui ne la salüassent en qualité d'Impératrice, & que son effigie étoit gravée sur la monnoie d'or. Il lui donna une liberté absoluë de disposer, comme il lui plairoit, des fons du tresor public, ce qui fut cause qu'elle fut extrémement considerée dans l'étenduë de l'Empire, & que tout le monde l'estima fort heureuse, Comme ce soin que Con-

stantin a pris de s'aquiter exactement des devoirs ausquels Dieu a obligé les enfans envers leurs pere & mere contribuë notablement à l'honneur de sa mémoire, je n'ai eu garde d'ômettre d'en parler en cét endroit. Il fit bâtir en Palestine tous les beaux Ouvrages que nous avons vûs. Il éleva aussi quantité d'Eglises fort magnifiques dans les autres Provinces, & les embellit de plus riches ornemens, que n'étoient celles qui avoient été faites auparavant.

CHAPITRE XLVIII.

Eglises bâties dans Constantinople pour honorer la mémoire des Martyrs.

Constantin aiant resolu de rendre aussi célébre qu'il seroit possible la Ville, à laquelle il avoit donné son nom, fit bâtir aux faux-bourgs & dans l'enceinte des murailles, un grand nombre de Chapelles & d'Oratoires tant pour honorer la mémoire des Martyrs, que pour mettre la Ville-même soûs la protection du Dieu des Martyrs. Le zele de la sagesse, duquel il brûloit, lui inspira le dessein d'abolir de telle sorte l'idolatrie dans Constantinople, que l'on n'y adorât plus les statuës des Dieux, que l'on n'y répandit plus de sang; que l'on n'y consumât plus la chair des victimes; que l'on n'y célébrât plus de fête en l'honneur des démons; & que l'on n'y observât plus aucune cérémonie payenne & prophane.

CHA-

CHAPITRE XLIX.

Images du bon Pasteur. Portrait de Daniel. Peintures de la Croix.

On voioit aux fontaines, qui sont au milieu du marché, des images du bon Pasteur, qui sont des images fort connuës à ceux qui ont lû l'Ecriture. On y voioit aussi l'effigie de Daniel avec les lions, ausquels il fut exposé. Elle étoit de cuivre doré. L'amour de Dieu étoit si ardent dans le cœur de l'Empereur qu'il fit mettre dans le lambris de la plus belle chambre de son Palais un grand tableau de la croix, enrichi d'or & de pierreries : Et je me persuade qu'il le regardoit comme un puissant boulevart contre les entreprises de l'ennemi de l'Empire.

CHAPITRE L.

Eglises bâties à Nicomédie & à Antioche.

L'Empereur ne se contenta pas d'élever tous les superbes édifices que je viens de décrire dans la Ville à laquelle il avoit donné son nom, il fit bâtir une Eglise tres-belle & tres-magnifique dans la capitale de Bithynie, & il y érigea le trophée de la victoire qu'il avoit remportée sur les ennemis de Dieu. Il embellit de plusieurs Eglises les principales villes de chaque Province. Il en fit bâtir une fort considérable par sa grandeur, par sa hauteur & par sa beauté dans la célébre Ville d'Antioche, Métropole de l'Orient. Elle avoit huit côtez, & étoit accompagnée de quantité de bâtimens tant hauts que bas. Il seroit difficile de

décrire la variété des ornemens en or, en cuivre, & en autres matiéres précieuses, dont elle éclatoit de toutes parts.

CHAPITRE LI.

Eglise bâtie à Mambré.

CONSTANTIN aiant appris que le Sauveur, en l'honneur duquel il avoit élevé un si grand nombre d'Eglises dans toute l'étenduë de l'Empire, étoit autrefois apparu en Palestine, à des hommes d'une singuliére piété, proche du chêne de Mambré, se resolut d'en élever une dans ce même lieu. Il écrivit pour cét effet aux Gouverneurs des Provinces, & leur ordonna d'apporter toute la diligence possible pour achever l'ouvrage en peu de tems. Il m'écrivit sur le même sujet une belle lettre, ou plûtôt une grave remontrance, par laquelle il me reprocha les abus qui se commettoient en ce lieu-là. J'insérerai ici la piéce entiere, pour faire connoître l'ardeur du zele, dont il brûloit pour la Religion.

CHAPITRE LII.

Lettre de Constantin à Eusébe.

Constantin, Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste: à Macaire, & aux autres Evêques de Palestine.

„ PARMI les faveurs que vous avez reçuës de „ ma belle-mere, cette Princesse si recom-„ mandable par la sainteté de ses mœurs, une des „ plus considérables, est le soin qu'elle a pris de „ m'a-

„ m'avertir d'un abus, qui se commettoit parmi
„ vous, afin que j'y apporte un remede, d'autant
„ plus promt qu'il est nécessaire. C'est une hor-
„ rible impiété de soüiller les saints lieux par de
„ prophanes cérémonies. Il est certainement
„ étrange, mes tres-chers freres, que j'aye ap-
„ pris par les lettres de ma belle-mere un desordre
„ qui étoit échapé à vôtre vigilance.

CHAPITRE LIII.

Le Sauveur est apparu à Abraham proche du chéne de Mambré.

„ ON dit que certaines personnes prophanent
„ par leurs superstitions un lieu, qui est pro-
„ che du chéne de Mambré, & que nous savons
„ avoir été autrefois sanctifié par la demeure d'A-
„ braham. Ils y ont élevé un Autel & une Statuë,
„ & ils y offrent sans cesse d'abominables sacrifi-
„ ces. Cette superstition étant contraire à la piété
„ de mon régne, & indigne de la sainteté du lieu,
„ je suis bien aise que vous sachiez que j'ai ordon-
„ né au Comte Acace Perfectissime & mon ami,
„ d'avoir soin que les statuës qui se trouveront en
„ ce lieu-là, soient brûlées incessamment; que
„ l'autel soit renversé, & que ceux qui seront si
„ hardis que d'y commettre quelque impiété au
„ préjudice de cette défense, soient punis selon
„ l'atrocité de leur crime. J'ai aussi commandé
„ que l'on élévât au même lieu une Eglise, où les
„ saints se puissent assembler. Que s'il se passe
„ quelque chose de contraire à cet ordre, ne man-
„ quez pas de m'en donner avis, à l'heure-même,
„ afin que les coupables soient punis du dernier
„ supplice. Vous savez que le Dieu & le Seigneur
„ de tous les hommes, fit l'honneur à Abraham

,, de lui apparoître en ce lieu-là, & de l'entretenir.
,, Que ce fut-là où le Sauveur se montra à lui avec
,, deux Anges, où il lui promit qu'il seroit pere
,, d'une nombreuse postérité, & où il accomplit
,, sa promesse ; que ce fut-là où la Loi de Dieu
,, commença à être observée. C'estpourquoi je
,, me tiens obligé non seulement de conserver ce
,, lieu-là exemt de toute sorte de corruption, mais
,, de le rétablir dans sa premiére sainteté, de sorte
,, qu'il soit uniquement consacré au culte de Dieu.
,, Je ne doute point que vous ne secondiez en cela
,, mes intentions, puisqu'en les secondant vous
,, vous aquitterez d'un devoir indispensable de vô-
,, tre profession. Je prie Dieu, mes tres-chers
,, freres, qu'il vous conserve.

CHAPITRE LIV.

Démolition des Temples.

CONSTANTIN travailloit de la sorte avec une application infatigable à l'avancement de la gloire de Dieu, à l'établissement de son culte, à la destruction de l'erreur, & à l'extinction de l'idolâtrie. Il y eut des temples dont il fit ôter les portes. Il y en eut d'autres qu'il fit découvrir, afin qu'étant exposez aux pluïes & aux autres injures des saisons, ils tombassent en ruine. Il y en eut, d'où il fit tirer des statuës de bronze que l'erreur de l'antiquité avoit consacrées, & dont elle avoit parlé avec des termes qui marquoient beaucoup d'estime & de respect, & les laissa exposées aux yeux du public dans les places de Constantinople. Le peuple regardoit d'un côté Apollon Pythien, de l'autre Apollon Sminthien. Les Trépiés de Delphes étoient dans le Cirque. Les Muses avoient été transférées de l'Helicon au Palais. Enfin toute la Ville impériale étoit remplie de statuës de cuivre

& de

& de bronze, qui avoient été faites par les plus excellens ouvriers, & consacrées dans les Provinces par la superstition des peuples. Mais aprés que ces peuples leur ont immolé un nombre innombrable de victimes comme à des divinitez, pendant qu'ils étoient comme accablez de la maladie de l'erreur, qui étoit alors la maladie générale du genre humain, ils ont enfin reconnu, quoique fort tard, combien ils s'étoient trompez, quand l'Empereur a exposé ces mêmes statuës aux railleries, & au mépris de tout le monde. Pour ce qui est des statuës d'or & d'argent, voici de quelle maniére il en ôta l'usage. Sachant que ces ouvrages faits avec beaucoup d'art, des plus riches matiéres que la nature ait proposées à la cupidité, étoient comme des pierres qui faisoient tomber les foibles & les aveugles, il se resolut de les ôter, & de rendre le chemin libre & seur. Il ne se servit point pour cét effet, de la valeur ni de la force des gens de guerre, il n'emploia que la prudence & l'adresse de quelques-uns de ses amis qu'il envoia secrétement dans les Provinces. Ils passérent à travers la foule des Idolâtres, sans étre couverts d'autres armes que de la pieté de l'Empereur & de leur propre zele pour la foi, & abolirent entiérement les plus anciennes erreurs. Ils obligérent d'abord les Prêtres Paiens à representer leurs Idoles, & à les tirer des lieux les plus secrets, où ils les avoient cachées. Ils dépoüillérent ensuite ces Idoles de leurs ornemens, & découvrirent leur laideur à tout le monde. Enfin ils mirent à part ce qu'elles avoient de plus précieux, fondirent l'or & l'argent pour le garder, & laissérent aux Paiens ce qui n'étoit d'aucune valeur. L'Empereur fit transporter au même tems les statuës qui n'étoient que de cuivre ou de bronze. Ainsi ces Dieux autrefois si fort célébrez par les fables de la Gréce, furent liez & traînez comme des esclaves.

CHAPITRE LV.

Démolition d'un temple de Phénicie.

L'EMPEREUR recherchoit avec un ſoin merveilleux juſques aux moindres reſtes de l'erreur. Il découvrit de ſon Palais un piége dreſſé au ſalut des ames dans un coin de la Phénicie, de la même ſorte que l'Aigle découvre du haut du Ciel ce qui ſe paſſe ſur la terre. C'étoit un bois, & un Temple conſacré à l'honneur d'un infame Démon, ſoûs le nom de Venus; non dans une place publique, pour ſervir d'ornement à une grande Ville; mais à Aphaca dans un endroit fort deſert du Mont Liban. On y tenoit une école ouverte d'impudicité. Il y avoit des hommes qui renonçant à la dignité de leur ſéxe s'y proſtituoient comme des femmes, & qui croioient ſe rendre la Divinité propice par l'infamie de cette monſtrueuſe corruption. C'étoit un lieu privilégié pour commettre impunément l'adultére, & d'autres abominations. Perſonne n'en pouvoit arrêter le cours, puiſque perſonne ne pouvoit entrer en ce lieu-là, pour peu qu'il eût d'honnêteté & de retenuë. L'Empereur en aiant eu connoiſſance jugea que ce temple ne méritoit pas d'étre éclairé des raions du Soleil, & commanda qu'il fût démoli, que les ſtatuës fuſſent briſées, & les ornemens enlevez. Cét ordre fut exécuté à l'heure-même par des ſoldats, & ceux qui avoient été autrefois les plus adonnez à la débauche, changérent de mœurs de peur d'étre châtiez avec la rigueur dont l'Empereur les ménaçoit. Les Paiens-mêmes reconnurent l'extravagance de leur ſuperſtition, & s'abſtinrent des excés les plus blâmables.

CHA-

CHAPITRE LVI.

Démolition du temple d'Esculape.

L'ERREUR dont un nombre innombrable de personnes étoient prévenuës, qu'un démon de Cilicie avoit la vertu de guérir les maladies les plus dangereuses, bien que ce ne fût qu'un imposteur qui se joüoit de la simplicité des peuples, l'Empereur qui s'étoit proposé d'autoriser le culte de Dieu, & de n'en souffrir aucun autre, commanda d'abatre le temple. A l'heure-même cét édifice, qui avoit été regardé avec admiration par les Philosophes, fut abatu par les mains des moindres soldats. Celui qui avoit si long-tems trompé les hommes en promettant de les guérir, ne trouva point de remède pour lui-même en cette rencontre, non plus qu'il n'en trouva point lorsqu'il fut frappé de la foudre, comme les Poëtes l'ont feint. Le coup que Constantin lui donna n'eut rien de feint, ni de fabuleux. Il renversa de telle sorte le temple, qu'il ne resta aucun vestige de l'erreur.

CHAPITRE LVII.

Conversion des Paiens.

LORSQUE ceux qui avoient été les plus attachez au culte des démons virent leur erreur manifestement découverte, les temples démolis, & les statuës renversées; les uns embrassérent la doctrine salutaire du Sauveur, & ceux qui ne la voulurent pas embrasser, condamnérent la superstition de leurs peres, & se moquérent de ceux

qu'ils avoient autrefois adorez comme des Dieux. Ils avoient juste sujet de s'en moquer puisqu'ils voioient les ordures qui avoient été long-tems cachées soûs la beauté extérieure de ces figures. Ils ne voioient au dedans que des os pouris, que des lambeaux d'étofes, que de la paille, & du foin. Quand ils virent qu'au dedans de ces statuës il n'y avoit ni aucun Démon qui rendît des Oracles, ni aucun Dieu qui prédît l'avenir, ni aucun phantôme noir & ténébreux qui pût être vû, ils condamnérent leur folie & celle de leurs ancêtres. Voila pourquoi il n'y eut point de caverne si obscure ni si profonde où n'entrassent ceux que l'Empereur avoit envoiez pour extirper les restes de l'idolatrie, & il n'y eut point de sanctuaire dans les temples où les soldats ne marchassent comme dans le lieu le plus prophane, depuis que l'aveuglement du Paganisme avoit été publiquement reconnu.

CHAPITRE LVIII.

Démolition d'un temple de Venus. Construction d'une Eglise.

CETTE action est sans doute une de plus belles de Constantin, bien qu'il en ait fait un grand nombre de semblables dans les Provinces. J'en raconterai ici une qu'il fit à Heliopole Ville de Phénicie. Les Paiens de cette Ville révérant publiquement la débauche permettoient à leurs femmes, & à leurs filles de se prostituer impunément. L'Empereur, dont je parle, aiant été choisi de Dieu pour enseigner la retenuë & la continence à toute la terre, défendit à ces Peuples de continuer dans ce prodigieux déréglement, & faisant envers eux par ses lettres la fonction de Prédicateur, ils les exhorta à re-

à recevoir la lumiére de la foi, & à reconnoître le Dieu véritable. Il ne se contenta pas de leur annoncer de la sorte la doctrine de l'Evangile. Il fit élever au milieu de leur Ville un superbe édifice, & le consacra aux exercices de nôtre Religion. Ainsi on vit un miracle nouveau, & qui jusques alors avoit été inouï. Une multitude de personnes attachées à la superstition Païenne fut changée en un moment, en une assemblée de fidéles gouvernez par des Diacres, des Prêtres, & un Evêque. L'Empereur fit distribuer de grandes sommes dans la même Ville pour le soûlagement des misérables, à dessein de les attirer par cette libéralité à l'Evangile, selon cette pensée de saint Paul, *pourvû que Jesus Christ soit annoncé, de quelque maniére que ce soit, soit par occasion, soit par un vrai zele, je m'en réjoüis.*

CHAPITRE LIX.

Tumulte excité dans la ville d'Antioche, à l'occasion d'Eustate.

PENDANT que la Religion Chrétienne s'établissoit de la sorte parmi tous les Peuples, & que l'Eglise goûtoit les fruits de la paix, la jalousie qui fait son mal du bien des autres, ne manqua pas de troubler nôtre prospérité. Elle espéra que l'aigreur de nos disputes & l'excés de nos desordres, exciteroient contre nous l'indignation de l'Empereur, & dans cette espérance elle alluma dans Antioche le feu d'une furieuse contestation, & remplit l'Eglise de cette Ville de troubles aussi tragiques que ceux que les Poëtes prophanes font paroître sur les théatres. Les fidéles se divisérent en deux partis, & le reste des habitans, les Magistrats, & les gens de guerre prirent les armes

les uns contre les autres, & en fussent venus aux mains, s'ils n'eussent été retenus par un ordre secret de la Providence; & par l'apprehension d'exciter la colére de l'Empereur. Ce Prince arrêta, comme un sage Médecin, le cours de ce mal par sa douceur naturelle. Il envoia à cette Ville un Comte d'une fidélité éprouvée, qui appaisa l'émotion par sa prudence, & écrivit lui-même plusieurs lettres pour exhorter les habitans à la paix, & à la modestie Chrétienne; Il les excusa en quelque sorte, & rejetta la faute de ce qui étoit arrivé sur celui qui en avoit été le principal auteur. Je rapporterois ici ses lettres entiéres à-cause des enseignemens salutaires qu'elles contiennent, si je n'apprehendois de laisser quelque tache à la réputation de ceux qui avoient excité le desordre, dont je ne veux point renouveller la mémoire. Je ne rapporterai que celle où il témoigne sa joie du rétablissement de la bonne intelligence, & où il exhorte les habitans à ne point souhaiter pour Pasteur, l'Evêque d'une autre Ville par l'entremise duquel ils s'étoient réconciliez, & de choisir selon la coûtume, celui que le Sauveur leur destineroit. Voici les termes de sa lettre.

CHAPITRE LX.

Lettre de Constantin aux habitans d'Antioche par laquelle il leur ordonne de laisser Eusébe à Césarée, & d'élire un autre Evêque que lui.

Constantin, Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste: au peuple d'Antioche.

„ L'UNION qui est établie parmi vous a été „ tres-agréable aux personnes les plus intelli„ gentes, & les plus éclairées du siécle. Vôtre „ ma-

» maniére de vivre, vôtre zele pour la Religion &
» vôtre affection à mon service, me donnent pour
» vous une affection indissoluble & inviolable. La
» prudence de la conduite est la source de tous les
» biens, dont on joüit dans le cours de cette vie.
» Qu'y a-t-il qui vous convienne si fort que cette
» prudence ? Ne vous étonnez donc pas que je dise
» que l'amour de la vérité a plus servi à procurer
» vôtre conservation, qu'à attirer sur vous la haine.
» Qu'y a-t-il de si souhaitable & de si estimable
» parmi des freres qui marchent ensemble dans le
» même chemin de la justice, & qui tendent au
» même lieu du repos, que Dieu leur a promis,
» que d'être dans une parfaite union d'esprits & de
» volontez ? La perfection que Dieu exige de ceux
» qui font profession de la Loi, & le desir que j'ai
» de voir le choix que vous avez fait, confirmé par
» de saintes œuvres, vous obligent à entretenir
» cette union. Si vous-vous étonnez de cette ex-
» orde ; & que vous n'en découvriez pas le dessein,
» je vous l'expliquerai tres-volontiers. Les témoi-
» gnages avantageux, que les actes que j'ai lûs
» rendent à Eusébe Evêque de Césarée, dont il y
» a long-tems que je connois la profonde doctri-
» ne, jointe à une singuliere modestie, & les élo-
» ges extraordinaires qu'ils font de son mérite,
» m'ont découvert le desir que vous avez de l'élire
» pour vôtre Evêque. Quelles pensées croiez-
» vous que j'aie eües sur ce sujet, quand j'ai exa-
» miné les régles de la vérité & de la justice? Quel-
» le inquiétude vous figurez-vous que ce dessein
» que vous avez, m'ait apportée ? O sainte foi,
» qui nous as prescrit par la bouche du Sauveur la
» forme de nôtre conduite, que tu serois dure &
» fâcheuse aux pécheurs, si tu ne refusois d'agir
» par le motif de tes intérêts ! Il me semble que ce-
» lui qui préfére la paix à toutes choses, se met au
» dessus de la victoire même. Il n'y a personne qui
» ne

„ ne soit bien-aise de la remporter. Mais il est encore plus honnête de s'en priver, de peur de „ blesser la justice. Je vous prie, mes tres-chers „ freres, de me dire, pourquoi vous prenez une „ resolution qui est injurieuse à d'autres? Pourquoi formez-vous des desseins qui sont contraires à la pieté dont vous faites profession? J'estime extrémement cét Evêque, pour qui vous témoignez tant d'amour & tant de respect; mais „ il ne faut pas mêpriser à son occasion des loix qui „ ont été généralement reçuës, troubler les autres dans la possession de leurs biens, & faire un „ choix odieux, comme si l'on ne pouvoit trouver, non un, ou deux Ecclésiastiques, mais „ plusieurs aussi dignes qu'Eusébe, d'étre placez „ sur la Chaise Episcopale d'Antioche. Quand on „ procéde sans violence à l'élection des Dignitez „ Ecclésiastiques, on trouve tous les sujets égaux. „ L'examen que l'on fait des qualitez de quelqu'un, ne doit point étre injurieux aux autres. „ Bien que tous les esprits n'aient pas la même élévation, ils ont tous la même connoissance des „ commandemens de Dieu & la même inclination „ de les observer. Si nous voulons avoüer franchement la verité, ce que vous avez fait, n'est „ pas retenir un Evêque, c'est l'enlever, ce n'est „ pas une action de justice, c'est une violence & „ un attentat. De quelque sentiment, dont le „ peuple soit prévenu sur ce sujet, je dirai hardiment que cette entreprise a donné lieu à de mauvais bruits, & qu'elle a excité d'horribles tempêtes. Les brebis oublient leur douceur naturelle, & donnent des marques de colére, lorsqu'elles se voient abandonnées par leurs Pasteurs. Que si je ne me trompe point en ceci, je „ vous prie de considérer les avantages que vous „ aquérerez, en renonçant au dessein d'enlever „ Eusébe. Vous conserverez l'amitié des habitans

„ de

„de Césarée. Eusébe, qui a fait un voiage à vô„tre Ville par une intention tres-loüable, aura „eu l'avantage que sa vertu ait été honorée par le „choix que vous avez voulu faire de sa personne, „& vous aurez la gloire de vous maintenir en „possession de vôtre ancienne coûtume, si vous „apportez tous les soins, dont vous étes capa„bles, pour chercher sans bruit, sans tumulte, „sans sédition, un Evêque tel qu'il vous est né„cessaire. Ces clameurs sont toûjours injustes. „Ce sont des étincelles qui excitent des incendies. „Que je puisse étre aussi avant dans la grace de „Dieu; que je puisse étre aussi bien dans vos es„prits & dans vos cœurs; que je puisse étre aussi „heureux dans tout le cours de ma vie; que je „vous aime, & que je vous souhaite un parfait „repos. Renoncez aux contestations. Rétablis„sez parmi vous la bonne intelligence avec la pu„reté des mœurs, élevez l'Etendart de la paix, & „conduisez vôtre vaisseau avec un gouvernail „aussi ferme que le fer, vers la lumiére celeste. „Chargez-le de marchandises incorruptibles. „Tout ce qui pouvoit le corrompre, en a été „ôté. Conservez avec soin les biens que vous „possédez, n'entreprenez rien légérement. Je „prie Dieu, mes tres-chers freres, qu'il vous „conserve.

CHAPITRE LXI.

Lettre de Constantin à Eusébe, par laquelle il le loüe d'avoir refusé l'Evêché d'Antioche.

Constantin, Vainqueur, tres-Grand Auguste : à Eusébe.

„J'AI lû plusieurs fois vôtre lettre, & j'ai re„connu que vous avez tres-exactement observé „la

„ la discipline de l'Eglise. C'est l'effet d'une singuliére piété de demeurer ferme dans le sentiment qui est le plus conforme à la volonté de Dieu, & à la tradition des Apôtres. Vous devez vous tenir heureux d'avoir été estimé par le jugement presque de tout l'univers, digne du gouvernement de toute l'Eglise. Le desir que tous les peuples témoignent d'être soûs vôtre conduite, fait le comble de ce bonheur. Vous avez agi sans doute avec beaucoup de prudence, quand, suivant les commandemens de Dieu, & la discipline des Apôtres, vous avez refusé l'Evêché d'Antioche, & avez mieux aimé demeurer dans celùi où vous avez été établi dés le commencement par l'ordre de Dieu. J'ai fait réponse & aux habitans d'Antioche, & aux Evêques vos Collégues, qui m'avoient écrit sur ce sujet. Quand vôtre Sainteté verra mes lettres, elle reconnoîtra aisément que je les ai écrites, par le mouvement de l'Esprit de Dieu, & que le dessein de ces peuples étoit contraire à la justice. Il faudra que vous assistiez à leurs assemblées, afin que la resolution que vous avez prise, y soit confirmée.

CHAPITRE LXII.

Lettre de Constantin au concile, par laquelle il défend de transférer Eusébe, de Césarée à Antioche.

Constantin, Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste : à Théodore, à Théodote, à Narcisse, à Aëtius, à Alphée, & aux autres Evêques assemblez à Antioche.

„ J'AI lû la lettre que vôtre Sainteté m'a écrite, „ & j'ai reconnu la sage résolution d'Eusébe vô-

„ tre

„ tre Collégue. Aprés avoir été instruit tres-exacte-
„ ment tant par vos lettres que par celles des Com-
„ tes Perfectissimes Acace & Stratége, de ce qui
„ s'est passé dans l'assemblée, & y avoir fait une
„ tres-sérieuse réfléxion, j'ai mandé au peuple
„ d'Antioche, ce qui m'a paru plus conforme à la
„ volonté de Dieu, & à l'ordre de l'Eglise. J'ai
„ fait ajoûter à la fin de cette lettre, la copie de celle
„ que je leur ai adressée, afin que vous puissez con-
„ noître ce que l'équité m'a obligé de leur écrire
„ sur ce que vous demandiez avec eux que le tres-
„ saint Eusébe fut transféré du Siége de Césarée à
„ celui d'Antioche. La lettre d'Eusébe semble fort
„ conforme aux saints Canons. Mais il est à pro-
„ pos que vous sachiez aussi quel est mon senti-
„ ment. J'ai appris qu'Euphronius Prêtre, & Ci-
„ toien de Césarée en Cappadoce; & George Prê-
„ tre & Citoien d'Aréthuse ordonné par Aléxandre
„ Evêque d'Aléxandrie, sont deux hommes qui
„ tiennent une saine doctrine. Proposez-les avec
„ les autres qui seront jugez dignes d'être élevez à
„ la dignité Episcopale, & faites une élection con-
„ forme à la tradition Apostolique. Je prie Dieu,
„ mes tres-chers freres, qu'il vous conserve.

CHAPITRE LXIII.

Soins pris par Constantin pour l'extirpation des hérésies.

VOILA ce que l'incomparable Empereur écrivit aux saints Pasteurs, pour les exhorter à procurer la paix à l'Eglise. Quand il eut assoupi les disputes, & établi l'uniformité de la doctrine, il entreprit d'exterminer une dangereuse impiété. Il envoia ordre aux Gouverneurs des Provinces de poursuivre, & de chasser des hommes qui ravageoient la bergerie, soûs une fausse apparence de mo-

modestie & de gravité de faux-Prophétes, que le Sauveur appele des loups ravissans couverts de peaux de brebis, & dont la cruauté ne paroît que par leurs actions, qui sont les fruits de leur cœur. Il ne se contenta pas de faire expédier cét ordre contre eux; il leur envoia un discours, par lequel il les exhortoit à changer de sentiment, & à revenir à l'Eglise, comme au port de leur salut. Voici comment il leur parle.

CHAPITRE LXIV.

Constitution de Constantin contre les hérétiques.

Constantin Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste, aux Hérétiques.

„ NOVATIENS, Valentiniens, Marcionites, „ Pauliens, Cataphrygiens, & tous autres, „ qui enseignez des doctrines nouvelles dans des „ assemblées particuliéres, apprenez de cette loi, „ la vanité & la fausseté de vos opinions, & la mali„ gnité du poison, par lequel vous infectez les „ ames, & leur donnez la mort. Vous étes les en„ nemis de la vérité & de la vie. Vos conseils sont „ pernicieux, ne tendent qu'au vice & à la corru„ ption, à l'oppression de l'innocence, & à la ruine „ de la foi. Vous commettez continuellement „ des péchez, soûs prétexte de rendre service à „ Dieu, vous faites des blessures mortelles à des „ consciences innocentes, & vous ôtez la lumiére „ aux yeux qui la cherchent. La multitude ni „ l'importance de mes occupations ne me permet„ tent pas de faire une plus longue, ni une plus ex„ acte énumération de vos crimes. Ils sont si énor„ mes, si atroces, si infames qu'il me faudroit plus „ d'un jour pour les expliquer. Je suis même bien-

„ aise

„ aise d'en détourner ma pensée, de peur de corrompre la pureté de ma foi. Comment souffrirois-je plus long-tems ce desordre, puisque ma patience est cause que ceux qui se portent bien, sont attaquez de ce mal contagieux? Pourquoi n'en arracherois-je pas la racine?

CHAPITRE LXV.

Constantin défend aux Hérétiques de s'assembler.

„ VÔTRE impiété ne pouvant plus être supportée, Nous vous défendons par cette loi de faire à l'avenir des assemblées, ni en public, ni en particulier; & nous ordonnons que tous les lieux, où vous les faisiez par le passé, vous seront ôtez. Que ceux d'entre vous, qui recherchent de bonne foi la pureté de la Religion, reviennent au sein de l'Eglise, & qu'ils rentrent dans la sainte communion, où ils trouveront la vérité. On ne doit pas souffrir dans un siécle aussi heureux que le nôtre, les impostures dont le schisme & l'hérésie usent, pour tromper les ames simples. Il est bien plus juste de faire en sorte que ceux qui vivent dans l'espérance des biens celestes, reviennent de leur égarement, qu'ils retournent des sentiers écartez au droit chemin; des ténébres à la lumiére; de la vanité à la vérité; de la mort à la vie. Pour cét effet nous avons ordonné, comme nous l'avons déja dit, que les Oratoires des hérétiques, si toutefois on les peut appeler Oratoires, soient donnez à l'Eglise Catholique, & que les autres lieux, où vous vous assembliez, soient confisquez, sans que vous puissiez vous assembler en aucun à l'avenir, soit en particulier, ou en public. Que cette loi soit publiée.

CHA-

CHAPITRE LXVI.

Livres trouvez entre les mains des hérétiques. Conversion de plusieurs d'entre eux.

Les assemblées des hérétiques aiant été dissipées par l'autorité de cette loi, & ces bêtes cruelles mises en fuite, une partie de ceux qu'ils avoient trompez, aiant été épouvantez par les ménaces de l'Empereur, dissimulérent lâchement leurs sentimens, & rentrérent de mauvaise foi dans l'Eglise. Comme il avoit été ordonné que les livres des hérétiques seroient recherchez, on arrêta quantité de personnes qui s'adonnoient à des arts défendus. Et ces gens-là usoient de toute sorte de déguisemens, pour éviter la punition de leurs crimes. Il y en eut d'autres qui se convertirent tres-sincérement. Les Evêques examinérent les uns & les autres avec tout le soin possible. Ils chassérent ceux qui avoient usé de cét artifice, que de se couvrir de peaux de brebis, pour se faire recevoir ; & à l'égard de ceux qui s'étoient presentez de bonne foi, ils les admirent à la communion, aprés les avoir éprouvez pendant quelque tems. Voila la conduite qui fut gardée envers les hérétiques. Ceux qui ne tenoient aucune doctrine contraire à celle de l'Eglise, & qui n'en avoient été séparez que par la faute des schismatiques, y furent réünis à l'heure-même. Ils retournérent à leur patrie celeste, aprés un long exil, & reconnurent leur divine Mere, aprés une longue absence. Voila comment les membres se réjoignirent pour ne faire plus qu'un même corps. Voila comment l'Eglise Catholique demeura seule, sans aucune assemblée d'hérétiques, & ce merveilleux changement fut l'ouvrage de nôtre seul Empereur tres-chéri de Dieu.

LA



LA VIE DE L'EMPEREUR CONSTANTIN,

Écrite par Eusébe Evêque de Césarée.

LIVRE QUATRIE'ME.

CHAPITRE PREMIER.

Constantin fait des largesses, & donne des charges.

L'Empereur ne négligeoit pas le gouvernement de l'Etat, pendant qu'il travailloit avec tant d'application, à l'aggrandissement de l'Eglise, & à la propagation de l'Evangile. Il donnoit sans cesse aux habitans des Provinces, des marques de son affection, soit par le soin paternel, qu'il prenoit en général de leurs intérêts, ou par les libéralitez qu'il exerçoit envers chaque particulier. Il n'a jamais trompé l'espérance de personne, qui ait eu recours à sa bonté, & jamais ne lui

lui a refusé sa demande. Il a donné aux uns de l'argent, aux autres des terres, aux autres des charges de Consul, de Sénateur, de Gouverneur de Province; de Comte du premier, du second, ou du troisiéme Ordre. Il a donné à plusieurs autres le titre de Perfectissime; car pour gratifier un plus grand nombre de personnes, il inventa un grand nombre de nouvelles dignitez.

CHAPITRE II.

Remise de la quatriéme partie des Impositions.

La passion qu'il avoit de rendre la vie à tous ses sujets, non seulement tranquille, mais agréable, paroit par l'exemple rare d'une générosité qui s'étendra au de-là de son siécle, & qui est loüée châque jour par la foi publique. Il déchargea les propriétaires des levées de la quatriéme partie du tribut qu'ils avoient accoûtumé de paier, de sorte que de quatre années ils en avoient une libre, où ils joüissoient de tous leurs fruits. Cette grace a été accordée pour toûjours, & se doit répandre sur la postérité la plus éloignée.

CHAPITRE III.

Egalement des Impositions.

Quelques-uns s'étant plaints de ce que l'on n'avoit observé aucune équité, lorsque l'on avoit imposé les tributs sous les régnes précédens, & que l'on les avoit extraordinairement surchargez; l'Empereur donna ordre qu'on leur fit justice, & qu'on n'exigeât d'eux l'imposition qu'à proportion de la valeur de leurs terres.

CHA-

CHAPITRE IV.

Libéralité exercée par Constantin envers les plaideurs qui avoient perdu leur cause.

LORS qu'il avoit jugé une cause, il donnoit ou de l'argent, ou des héritages à celui qui l'avoit perduë pour le consoler de sa perte, & pour le renvoier aussi satisfait que celui en faveur duquel il venoit de prononcer. Il croioit que personne ne devoit se retirer triste de sa presence. Ainsi il renvoioit les deux parties fort contentes,& faisoit autant admirer sa libéralité que sa justice.

CHAPITRE V.

Défaite des Scythes.

EST-IL besoin que je parle des Nations barbares qu'il a réduites à l'obeïssance de l'Empire? Il a accoûtumé les Scythes & les Sarmates au joug de la domination Romaine qu'ils avoient toûjours secoüé. Les Empereurs ses prédécesseurs paioient un tribut annuel aux premiers de ces peuples. Mais Constantin ne pouvant se soûmettre à une si basse servitude, marcha contre eux soûs l'Etendart de son Sauveur, domta par la force de ses armes ceux qui osérent faire résistance, & adoucit le naturel farouche des autres par l'entremise de ses Ambassadeurs.

CHAPITRE VI.

Réduction des Sarmates à l'obéïssance des Romains.

DIEU reprima lui-même l'orgueil des Sarmates, & les abbaissa soûs les piés de Constantin. Ils avoient donné des armes à leurs esclaves pour combattre les Scythes qui leur avoient déclaré la guerre. Quand ces esclaves eurent remporté la victoire, ils se soûlevérent contre leurs maîtres, & les chassérent de leur païs. Ces fugitifs ne trouvérent point d'autre azyle que la clémence de Constantin qui les reçut tres-civilement, & mit dans ses troupes ceux qui étoient propres à porter les armes, & assigna aux autres des terres pour leur subsistance. Ils avoüoient eux-mêmes que leur disgrace s'étoit changée en un singulier bon-heur, puisqu'ils s'étoient défaits de la barbarie de leur nation, & avoient appris la politesse des Romains.

CHAPITRE VII.

Ambassades de diverses Nations. Presens faits par l'Empereur.

DIEU soûmit de la sorte plusieurs peuples à la puissance de Constantin. Il recevoit sans cesse des Ambassadeurs chargez de riches presens. J'ai vû souvent à la porte de son Palais des étrangers qui avoient des habits d'une mode fort différente de la nôtre, & les cheveux, & la barbe d'une autre façon. Ils étoient terribles à voir, leur regard étoit farouche, & leur taille monstrueuse. Les uns avoient le visage fort rouge. Les autres l'avoient plus blanc que la nége, & les autres d'u-

ne couleur mêlée. On voioit parmi ces étrangers des Indiens, & des Ethyopiens, qui étant, comme dit Homére, divisez en deux peuples, habitent à l'extrémité du monde. Ils apportoient, comme on le voit representé dans les tableaux, ce qu'ils avoient de plus excellent dans leur Païs. Les uns offroient à Constantin des Couronnes d'or, les autres des diadémes semez de perles, les autres de jeunes garçons qui avoient de blondes chevelures; les autres des vestes à fleurs relevées d'or à la façon de leur Païs, les autres des chevaux; les autres des bouclies, des lances, des arcs, & des fléches. Ces presens étoient non seulement une marque de leurs soûmissions & de leurs respects, mais aussi un gage de leur alliance & de leurs services. L'Empereur les recevoit trés-volontiers, & leur en faisoit à l'heure-même de plus riches. Il gratifia les plus considérables de ces Ambassadeurs de quelques dignitez de l'Empire, & la plûpart s'en trouvérent si sensiblement obligez, qu'ils aimérent mieux demeurer à sa Cour, que de retourner en leur Païs.

CHAPITRE VIII.

Constantin écrit au Roi de Perse en faveur des Chrétiens.

Le Roi de Perse aiant recherché l'alliance de l'Empereur aussi bien que les autres étrangers, & lui aiant envoié pour cét effet des Ambassadeurs avec des presens, ce Prince usant d'une magnificence extraordinaire, lui envoia de son côté des presens beaucoup plus riches que ceux qu'il avoit reçus. Aiant appris avec joie qu'il y avoit dans ce Roiaume quantité de personnes qui faisoient profession de la foi, il crût leur devoir faire sentir les

effets de sa protection, & écrivit en leur faveur en ces termes.

CHAPITRE IX.

Lettre de Constantin à Sapor Roi des Perses.

» En gardant la foi je suis éclairé de la lumiére de la vérité, & en suivant cette lumiére je pénétre de plus en plus la sainte obscurité de la foi. Je fais profession de la Religion qui m'enseigne à adorer un seul Dieu à la faveur duquel je suis parti des bors de l'Océan, & j'ai donné espérance à l'Empire de se voir bien-tôt delivré de ses disgraces. Les Provinces qui gémissoient soûs la domination des tirans, ont trouvé un Libérateur. Je publie la grandeur de ce Dieu qui les a secouruës. Je fais porter son Etendart par mes soldats qui l'adorent, & qui par son moien remportent des victoires tres-signalées.

CHAPITRE X.

Détestation des Idoles.

» J'Avoüe que j'ai toûjours sa grandeur presente à l'esprit, que je le regarde avec les yeux de l'ame dans l'élévation de sa gloire, & que je l'invoque à genous. Je déteste l'effusion du sang, la mauvaise odeur qui sort des entrailles des victimes, la lumiére qui est entretenuë par des matiéres tirées de la terre, & toutes les choses dont l'erreur & la superstition se servent pour perdre les Paiens. Dieu ne sauroit souffrir que les hommes abusent des biens qu'il

» leur

„ leur a accordez pour leur usage. Il ne demande qu'une ame pure, & une consience irréprehen-
„ sible dont il pése les actions. Il se plaît à la mo-
„ destie, & à la douceur. Il aime les personnes
„ paisibles, au lieu qu'il déteste ceux qui excitent les troubles. Il chérit la foi, & punit l'infidé-
„ lité. Il réprime l'orgueil, abbaisse ceux qui s'é-
„ lévent, & éléve ceux qui s'abbaissent. Il pro-
„ tége les Princes qui gouvernent avec justice, af-
„ fermit leur puissance, & leur donne la paix.

CHAPITRE XI.

De la prise de Valérien.

Je ne me trompe point, mon frere, quand
„ je reconnois que ce Dieu est le Seigneur, & le
„ pere de tous les hommes. Plusieurs de ceux qui
„ m'ont précédé, ont été si aveugles que de le nier. Mais leur fin a été si mal-heureuse, qu'el-
„ le a été proposée depuis comme un exemple fu-
„ neste qui devoit détourner les autres de l'impié-
„ té. Celui que la justice divine a, comme un fou-
„ dre, poursuivi d'ici jusques en vôtre païs, & qui y a érigé le trophée de son infamie, a été l'un
„ d'eux.

CHAPITRE XII.

Ruine des persécuteurs de l'Eglise.

„ Le châtiment public que les autres ont souf-
„ fért fait une partie de la gloire de nôtre sié-cle. J'ai été témoin de la mort déplorable de
„ ceux qui avoient fait des loix tres-injustes con-
„ tre les peuples qui font profession du culte de

 „ Dieu.

„ Dieu. C'est pourquoi je le remercie d'avoir par „ un ordre particulier de sa Providence rendu la „ paix à ceux qui observent sa loi. La bonté qu'il „ a de réünir tous les peuples dans l'exercice de la „ même Religion me fait espérer que nôtre siécle „ sera comblé de prospérité, & de bon-heur.

CHAPITRE XIII.

Priére en faveur des Chrétiens.

„ QUELLE joie croiez-vous que je sente, „ quand j'apprens que les plus belles Pro„ vinces de la Perse sont remplies de Chrétiens? „ Je souhaite que leurs affaires & les vôtres soient „ dans un état florissant, & que le souverain Sei„ gneur de l'univers vous soit favorable. Je mets „ les Chrétiens soûs la protection de vôtre clé„ mence. Je vous les laisse entre les mains, & „ vous supplie de leur faire sentir les effets de vô„ tre douceur & de vôtre bonté, qui ne vous se„ ront pas moins glorieux qu'ils vous seront uti„ les.

CHAPITRE XIV.

Paix accordée aux priéres de Constantin.

L'UNIVERS étant conduit comme un vaisseau, par l'adresse d'un savant Pilote, tous les peuples goûtérent les douceurs de la paix soûs la domination, & dans la Religion d'un Prince, qui mettoit sa gloire dans le service qu'il rendoit à Dieu. Comme il étoit persuadé que les priéres contribuoient notablement au bien de l'Etat, il en

en fit de tres-humbles & de tres-ardentes, & exhorta les saints Pasteurs de l'Eglise à en faire en sa faveur.

CHAPITRE XV.

Image de Constantin represente priant Dieu.

La pureté & l'ardeur de sa foi, paroissent sur les piéces d'or, où il est gravé en la même posture en laquelle il a accoûtumé de prier Dieu, les yeux levez au Ciel & les mains étenduës. Il n'y a point de Province, où l'on ne voie de ces piéces-là. Il y a quelques tableaux à l'entrée du Palais, où il est peint debout, & priant les mains étenduës, & les yeux levez au Ciel.

CHAPITRE XVI.

Défense de mettre le portrait de Constantin dans les temples des Paiens.

Que si Constantin tint à honneur d'être peint en posture de suppliant devant le trône de la Majesté éternelle, il ne voulut jamais que ses portraits fussent mis dans les temples, où les Paiens s'assemblent pour adorer les faux Dieux, de peur d'être soüillé par l'ombre & par la moindre apparence de cette damnable superstition.

CHAPITRE XVII.

Priéres faites dans le Palais.

QUICONQUE prendra la peine de considérer le soin que Constantin eut de faire comme une Eglise de son Palais, reconnoîtra clairement de plus éclatantes marques de sa piété que celles qui nous ont paru jusques ici. Il y donnoit à tout le monde un exemple public de devotion. Il y tenoit entre ses mains les livres de l'Ecriture, & méditoit les veritez saintes, qu'ils renferment. Aprés la méditation, il faisoit des priéres publiques avec toute sa Cour.

CHAPITRE XVIII.

Loi pour l'observation du Dimanche.

CONSTANTIN ordonna que le jour du Seigneur, qui est le jour du salut, & le premier de tous les jours seroit destiné à la priére. Il donna le soin de son Palais aux Diacres, & aux autres Ministres consacrez au service de Dieu. Il enseigna à ses Gardes & aux Officiers de sa Cour à observer le même jour, & à faire des priéres agréables à Dieu. Il excita autant qu'il lui fut possible, le reste de ses sujets à s'adonner aux mêmes exercices de piété. Il ordonna que le Samedi & le Dimanche seroient fêtez en l'honneur, comme il est probable, des mystéres que Dieu a eu agréable d'accomplir en ces jours-là.

CHAPITRE XIX.

Priére faite par les soldats Paiens, le Dimanche.

CONSTANTIN enseigna généralement à tous ses soldats, à observer avec respect, le jour du Dimanche, que l'on appele aussi le jour du Soleil & de la lumiére. Il le donna tout entier à ceux qui avoient embrassé la foi, pour vaquer sans interruption à la priére dans les lieux saints, où les Fidéles s'assemblent, & à l'égard de ceux qui n'ont pas encore reçu la parole de Dieu, il leur ordonna par une constitution particuliére, de s'assembler dans une belle campagne, & d'y réciter tous ensemble, au signal qui leur seroit donné, une priére qu'ils auroient auparavant apprise par cœur. Il leur apprit qu'ils ne devoient mettre leur confiance, ni dans la force de leur corps, ni dans la trempe de leurs armes, mais dans le secours de Dieu, qui est le Seigneur absolu de l'univers, l'auteur de tous les biens, & le dispensateur de la victoire, & qu'il la lui faut demander, en ouvrant les yeux, & en étendant les mains vers lui. La formule de priére qu'il leur prescrivit, étoit en Latin. En voici une traduction tres-fidéle.

CHAPITRE XX.

Priére prescrite par Constantin à ses soldats.

„ NOUS reconnoissons que vous étes le seul „ Dieu; nous avoüons que vous étes nôtre „ Seigneur, & nous implorons vôtre secours. „ C'est par vôtre aide que nous avons remporté la

„ victoire, & défait nos ennemis. Nous vous re-
„ mercions des faveurs que vous nous avez accor-
„ dées par le passé, & nous en espérons la conti-
„ nuation à l'avenir. Nous vous supplions tous de
„ nous conserver long-tems Constantin nôtre
„ Empereur, en possession de la santé & de la vi-
„ ctoire avec les tres-pieux Princes ses enfans.

CHAPITRE XXI.

Croix gravées sur les armes des soldats.

Constantin ne se contenta pas de prescrire cette priére aux gens de guerre, & de les obliger à la réciter publiquement le jour du Soleil. Il commanda que l'on gravât sur leurs armes le trophée de nôtre salut, & qu'au lieu des Etendars d'or, que l'on avoit accoûtumé de porter à la tête des armées, on n'y portât plus que l'Etendart de la Croix.

CHAPITRE XXII.

Assiduité de Constantin à la priére.

Ce pieux Prince, étant tres-instruit de nos mystéres, s'enfermoit à certaine heure de chaque jour dans son cabinet, pour se prosterner devant Dieu, & lui demander tres-humblement les graces, qui lui étoient nécessaires. Il rassembloit aux jours de fêtes, toutes les forces de son corps & de son esprit, pour vaquer aux exercices de piété avec une ardeur nouvelle, & il en donnoit l'exemple aux autres comme s'il eût été leur Pasteur & leur Evêque. Le soir du jour qui précédoit la fête, il faisoit allumer par toute la Ville, une si grande

grande quantité de cierges, & de lampes, que la nuit, où les Fidéles veilloient pour prier, étoit plus éclatante que le jour même. Dés que la pointe paroissoit, il faisoit des largesses à ses sujets, pour imiter la libéralité, avec laquelle le Seigneur répand sa lumiére.

CHAPITRE XXIII.

Culte des Idoles aboli.

LE même Empereur ferma les temples des Idoles à tous ses sujets, & leur défendit les sacrifices. Il envoia aussi une loi dans ses Provinces, par laquelle il obligea les Gouverneurs à l'observation du Dimanche, & des fêtes des Martyrs.

CHAPITRE XXIV.

Constantin s'appele lui-même Evêque, établi pour ce qui regarde le dehors de l'Eglise.

FAISANT un jour un festin aux Evêques, du nombre desquels j'avois l'honneur d'étre, il leur dit avec un fondement fort légitime, qu'il étoit aussi Evêque, & se servit à peu prés de ces paroles : *Vous avez été établis de Dieu Evêques, pour le dedans de l'Eglise, & moi je l'ai été pour le dehors.* Il s'aquittoit aussi tres-exactement de cette charge, & excitoit tous ses sujets à la piété avec la vigilance & le zéle d'un véritable Pasteur.

CHAPITRE XXV.

Idolatrie abolie. Spectacles des gladiateurs défendus.

Ce fut par un effet de ce zele qu'il défendit absolument de sacrifier aux Idoles, de consulter les devins, d'élever des statuës, de faire des cérémonies abominables & des combats de gladiateurs. Les habitans d'Egypte & d'Aléxandrie, aiant consacré au culte du Nil certains hommes efféminez, Constantin fit une loi, par laquelle il défendit absolument cette prophanation de la nature. Comme ces peuples superstitieux se figuroient que le Nil n'inonderoit plus leurs terres, depuis que son culte auroit été négligé, Dieu fit voir tout le contraire en faveur de nôtre Religion. Car aussi-tôt que ces hommes impurs eurent été exterminez de toutes les Villes qu'ils avoient soüillées par l'impiété de leur ministére, le Nil sembla témoigner la joie qu'il avoit de leur éloignement, par l'abondance avec laquelle il répandit ses eaux, & enseigner par-là-même à ces peuples insensez, à n'attribuer leur prospérité à aucun autre qu'à Dieu.

CHAPITRE XXVI.

Reformation des loix qui regardoient ceux qui n'avoient point d'enfans, & l'exécution des testamens.

Quiconque voudroit rechercher avec soin les autres abus que nôtre Empereur a reformez, trouveroit une ample matiére pour faire plusieurs volumes. Je ne marquerai ici qu'une ou deux loix qu'il a changées. Il y avoit une ancienne

disposition qui privoit ceux, qui n'avoient point d'enfans, des successions, qui sans cela leur auroient appartenu. L'Empereur crut la devoir corriger. Il jugeoit tres-sagement qu'il n'y a que les fautes volontaires qui méritent d'étre punies. Or plusieurs manquent d'enfans sans qu'il y ait de leur faute. Il y en a qui en desirent, & qui n'en peuvent obtenir de la nature. Il y en a d'autres qui ne seroient pas fâchez d'avoir leurs enfans pour heritiers. Mais ils ne veulent point en mettre au monde parce qu'ils ont autant d'aversion des femmes, que d'inclination à la vertu. Il y a des femmes qui se consacrent toutes entiéres au service de Dieu, & qui lui offrent la pureté de leur corps aussi bien que celle de leur cœur. Pour avoir fait à Dieu un sacrifice si agréable en seront-elles plus mal-traitées? Leur resolution mérite d'étre admirée, & leur persévérance surpasse les forces de la nature. Ceux qui aiant desiré des enfans n'en ont pû avoir, sont plus dignes de compassion que de châtiment. Ceux qui n'en veulent point avoir par le dessein d'arriver à une plus haute perfection, méritent d'étre admirez. Voila les motifs qui portérent l'Empereur à reformer cette loi. Le même Prince aiant remarqué que les formalitez prescrites par l'ancien droit pour la validité des testamens éludoient tres-souvent l'effet de la derniére volonté des mourans, il ordonna qu'en quelque maniére qu'un testament fût conçu il seroit valable, & que ceux qui ne le voudroient pas faire par écrit, le pourroient faire de vive voix en presence de témoins, capables d'en attester la vérité.

CHAPITRE XXVII.

Loix contre les Juifs, & en faveur des Evêques.

Le même Empereur défendit aux Juifs d'avoir des esclaves Chrétiens, dans la créance qu'il n'étoit pas juste que ceux qui avoient été rachêtez par le Sauveur, demeuraſſent ſoûs la puiſſance de ceux qui l'avoient tué, comme ils avoient dés auparavant tué les Prophétes. Il ordonna que le Chrétien ſeroit mis en liberté, & que le Juif ſeroit condamné à une amende. Il confirma les decrets que les Evêques avoient faits dans les Conciles, de ſorte qu'il n'étoit plus permis aux Gouverneurs des Provinces d'en empêcher l'exécution. Cette loi étoit fondée ſur l'opinion où il étoit, qu'il faut préférer les miniſtres de Dieu aux juges du ſiécle. Il publia un grand nombre de ſemblables loix qui mériteroient d'être recueillies & renfermées dans un volume, pour faire voir la ſageſſe & l'étenduë de ſa prévoiance. Que dirai-je du ſoin qu'il prenoit de chercher depuis le matin juſques au ſoir ceux qui avoient beſoin de ſon aſſiſtance?

CHAPITRE XXVIII.

Biens donnez aux Egliſes par Conſtantin.

Il exerçoit principalement ſa libéralité envers les Egliſes, leur donnant tantôt des terres, & tantôt des rentes pour la nourriture des Veuves, & des Orphelins. Il avoit ſoin de vêtir les pauvres, & honoroit particuliérement ceux qui s'étoient conſacrez au ſeruice de Dieu. Il avoit un reſpect ſingulier

gulier pour l'assemblée des Filles qui avoient resolu de garder toute leur vie leur virginité, & il ne doutoit point que leurs corps ne fussent des temples où habitoit l'Esprit saint.

CHAPITRE XXIX.

Harangues composées par Constantin.

LE Prince d'ont j'écris la vie passoit quelquefois les nuits entiéres dans la méditation de la Loi de Dieu. Aux heures de son loisir il composoit des harangues pour l'instruction de ses peuples, dans la créance qu'il ne les devoit conduire que par la raison. Ils accouroient en foule pour l'écouter. Quand il se trouvoit engagé par occasion à parler de nos mystéres, il se levoit & les expliquoit avec une modestie nompareille. Que si ses auditeurs lui applaudissoient, il les avertissoit par ses gestes à reserver leur admiration pour le Roi qui est dans le Ciel. L'ordre qu'il tenoit le plus souvent dans ses discours étoit de les commencer par la refutation de l'erreur des Paiens qui adoroient plusieurs Dieux. Il s'étendoit ensuite sur les preuves de l'unité de Dieu, & de la Providence par laquelle il gouverne l'Univers. Il expliquoit aprés cela les motifs qui l'ont porté à décendre sur la terre, & les circonstances de la vie qu'il y a menée. Il passoit de-là à la description du jugement, & épouvantoit ses auditeurs par la véhémence des invectives qu'il faisoit contre les avares, les injustes, & les violens. Reprenant quelquefois avec force les vices dont les principaux de sa Cour se sentoient coûpables, il les obligeoit à baisser les yeux. Il leur déclaroit hautement qu'ils rendroient un jour conte à Dieu de toutes leurs œuvres, que pour lui il leur avoit confié le gouvernement des Villes, & des

& des Provinces, comme il avoit reçu celui de l'Empire, que le souverain Seigneur de la puissance duquel ils relévent tous également, leur demanderoit raison de la maniére dont ils se seroient aquittez de leurs charges. Voila les salutaires instructions que l'ardeur, & la pureté de sa foi lui mettoient continuellement dans la bouche. Mais elles tomboient sur des cœurs durs & insensibles, qui étant remplis de l'amour des choses visibles, applaudissoient à la vérité, sans suivre les maximes qu'elle leur prescrivoit.

CHAPITRE XXX.

Avidité d'un avare confonduë par la prédication de Constantin.

AIANT un jour pris par la main un des principaux de sa Cour, il lui dit : Ne mettrons-nous point de bornes à nôtre cupidité : Puis aiant décrit avec sa lance, sur la terre, un espace à peu prés égal à la grandeur du corps humain, il ajoûta : Quand vous auriez amassé toutes les richesses de l'Univers, vous ne posséderez aprés cette vie qu'un espace tel, que je viens de vous marquer. Mais quelque soin qu'il prît de donner des avis si importans au salut, ils ne servirent à personne, & ils se trouvérent semblables à la parole de Dieu, qui le plus souvent ne trouve point de créance, & ne produit aucun fruit.

CHAPITRE XXXI.

Clémence de Constantin méprisée.

La trop grande inclination que Constantin avoit à la clémence, aiant fait cesser les châtimens dans l'étenduë presqu'entiére de l'Empire, il n'y avoit plus de barriére pour arrêter le cours des crimes. Plusieurs prirent occasion de cette licence pour blâmer le gouvernement. Je n'entreprendrai pas de décider s'ils avoient raison, ou non. Je me contente d'avoir rapporté la vérité du fait.

CHAPITRE XXXII.

Discours adressé par Constantin à l'assemblée des Fidéles.

L'Empereur composoit ses discours en latin, & ensuite on les traduisoit en grec. Je mettrai à la fin de cette vie celui qu'il adressa à l'assemblée des Fidéles, de peur que ce que j'en raconte ne passe pour une fable.

CHAPITRE XXXIII.

Constantin écoute debout, le discours que fit Eusébe en l'honneur du saint Sépulcre.

Je n'ai garde de passer soûs silence une action que ce merveilleux Prince fit un jour en ma presence. La connoissance que j'avois de sa pieté m'aiant

m'aiant donné la hardiesse de le prier d'assister à un discours que j'avois dessein de faire en l'honneur du tombeau de nôtre Sauveur, il y consentit avec joie. Je prononçai ce discours dans son Palais en presence d'un Auditoire composé d'un nombre innombrable de personnes de la Cour, & de la Ville. L'Empereur l'écouta debout au milieu de l'assemblée, & quelque instance que je lui fisse de s'asseoir sur le trône qui lui avoit été préparé, il n'en voulut rien faire. Il examinoit avec attention les maximes que j'avançois, & en confirmoit la vérité par son témoignage. Comme j'avois médité un fort long discours je voulois me taire sans l'avoir prononcé entier. Mais il m'exhorta à l'achever, & sur ce que je le suppliai encore de s'asseoir il s'en excusa tres-civilement, en me representant d'un côté que l'on ne sauroit écouter la parole de Dieu avec assés d'application, ni avec assés de respect, & en m'assurant de l'autre qu'il se trouvoit tres-commodément debout. Lorsque j'eus achevé mon discours je m'en retournai, & m'appliquai à mes occupations ordinaires.

CHAPITRE XXXIV.

Constantin écrit à Eusébe.

COMME ce Religieux Prince ne cessoit jamais de veiller aux nécessitez de l'Eglise, il me fit l'honneur de m'écrire deux lettres, par l'une desquelles il m'ordonnoit de faire transcrire les livres de l'Ecriture, & par l'autre il me faisoit réponse touchant un livre que j'avois eu l'honneur de lui adresser sur la maniére de célébrer la Fête de Pâques.

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CHAPTRE XXXV.

Lettre de Constantin à Eusébe, touchant le discours que cét Evêque avoit composé sur la célébration de la Fête de Pâques.

Constantin Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste: à Eusébe.

» C'EST sans doute une entreprise fort difficile » & qui est au dessus de toute sorte d'éloquen-» ce que d'expliquer les mystéres de Dieu, que » de déveloper la question si importante, & en » même-tems si obscure de la célébration de la » Fête de Pâques, de découvrir son origine, & » de trouver des paroles qui répondent à la digni-» té du sujet. Quand quelqu'un auroit bien conçu » les véritez saintes de la Religion, il ne seroit pas » pour cela capable de les énoncer. C'est pour-» quoi outre le plaisir singulier que j'ai pris à la » lecture de vôtre livre, j'ai admiré l'ardeur avec » laquelle vous-vous appliquez à l'étude, & la » loüable émulation de surpasser les autres savans, » & j'ai ordonné comme vous le souhaitiez, qu'il » fût publié, & mis entre les mains de toutes les » personnes qui ont un zele sincére pour nôtre Re-» ligion. La joie avéc laquelle je reçois ces riches » productions de vôtre esprit, vous oblige à m'en » presenter souvent de nouvelles. Je sai que vous » n'avez pas besoin que je vous excite à ce travail, » & que vous y étes assez porté de vous-même. » Cette estime que je fais de vos ouvrages, fait » voir que quelque difficulté qu'il y ait à conser-» ver leur beauté, en les mettant en une autre » langue, celui qui les a mis en latin, n'a man-qué

„ que ni de fidélité, ni d'élégance. Je prie Dieu, „ mon tres-cher frere, qu'il vous conserve. Voila ce que Constantin écrivit à Eusébe sur ce sujet. J'ajoûterai ce qu'il lui écrivit touchant les exemplaires de l'Ecriture.

CHAPITRE XXXVI.

Lettre de Constantin à Eusébe, touchant les copies qu'il desiroit avoir des Livres saints.

Constantin, Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste: à Eusébe.

„ La providence de nôtre Sauveur aiant attiré „ une multitude incroiable de personnes à la „ Religion Chrétienne dans la nouvelle Ville, à la„ quelle j'ai donné mon nom, il est juste de l'ag„ grandir, & d'y bâtir des Eglises. Je vous dirai la „ pensée que j'ai euë sur ce sujet. Je suis d'avis que „ vous fassiez écrire en beau parchemin, cinquan„ te exemplaires de l'Ecriture, dont vous savez „ que la lecture est tres-nécessaire dans l'Eglise, „ & que vous choisissiez des personnes capables, „ de sorte que ces exemplaires-là soient aisez à „ lire, & qu'ils puissent être transportez commo„ dément. J'ai mandé au Logothéte du Diocése, „ qu'il ait soin de fournir ce qui sera nécessaire „ pour cette dépense. Il sera de vôtre diligence „ de pourvoir à ce que ces copies soient achevées „ en peu de tems. Lorsqu'elles le seront, prenez, „ en vertu de cette lettre, deux voitures publi„ ques, pour me les envoier par un de vos Dia„ cres, que je recevrai favorablement. Je prie „ Dieu, mon tres-cher frere, qu'il vous con„ serve.

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CHAPITRE XXXVII.

Diligence apportée par Eusébe à l'exécution de l'ordre de l'Empereur.

Je m'aquitai incessamment de cette charge, que l'Empereur m'avoit donnée, & lui envoiai bien-tôt aprés de magnifiques exemplaires, comme il est justifié par une autre lettre, qu'il me fit l'honneur de m'écrire, pour me témoigner sa joie, de ce que la Ville de Constance, autrefois attachée au culte des Idoles, y avoit renoncé.

CHAPITRE XXXVIII.

Priviléges accordez à cette Ville.

En recevant la foi, elle reçut les faveurs du Prince de la terre, aussi-bien que les graces de celui du Ciel. Elle fut mise au rang des villes, au lieu qu'elle n'étoit autrefois qu'un bourg de Palestine, & changea son ancien nom, avec celui de Constantie, sœur de l'Empereur.

CHAPITRE XXXIX.

Conversion d'autres Villes à la foi.

Plusieurs autres villes donnérent un pareil exemple d'un si heureux changement. Celle qui dans la Phénicie porte le nom de l'Empereur, brûla ses Dieux, & embrassa la foi. Il y eut

y eut quantité de peuples dans les villes, & à la campagne, qui briférent les ftatuës qu'ils avoient adorées comme des divinitez; qui démolirent d'eux-mêmes les temples qu'ils avoient autrefois élevez en leur honneur, & qui bâtirent des Eglifes. Il ne m'eft pas poffible de reprefenter en détail les actions de nôtre Prince, dans le fein duquel Dieu avoit verfé les précieux trefors de fes graces. L'exécution d'une fi haute entreprife eft refervée à ceux qui ont l'honneur de joüir continuellement de fa prefence. Je me contenterai, avant que de parler de fa mort, d'en marquer ce que j'en ai pu apprendre.

CHAPITRE XL.

Trois fils de Conftantin élevez en divers tems à la dignité de Céfars.

Au tems dont je parle ici, il y avoit déja trente ans qu'il étoit parvenu à l'Empire. Il y affocia fes trois fils en trois occafions. Il fit cét honneur en la dixiéme année de fon régne, au premier qui avoit le même nom que lui. Il le fit en la vintiéme au fecond, qui avoit le nom de fon aïeul: Et il le fit en la trentiéme au troifiéme, qui par fon nom de Conftant, exprime parfaitement la fermeté, & la conftance de fon ame. Aprés avoir élevé à ce comble de la grandeur humaine fes fils, dont le nombre étoit comme une image, quoique foible & imparfaite, de celui des perfonnes, que nous adorons dans la Nature divine, il crut devoir faire une cérémonie magnifique dans la trentiéme année de fon Empire, pour remercier Dieu de la profpérité, dont il en avoit rempli le cours, & jugea que la Dédicace de l'E-

glife

glise qu'il avoit élevée à Jérusalem, seroit fort convenable en cette rencontre.

CHAPITRE XLI.

Convocation d'un Concile à Tyr.

L'ENVIE tâcha de troubler la joie de cette fête, de la même sorte qu'un nuage ténébreux s'oppose aux raions du Soleil. Elle ébranla les Eglises d'Egypte par la violence des contestations qu'elle y excita. L'Empereur convoqua à l'heure-même les Evêques d'Egypte, de Libye, d'Asie, & d'Europe, pour les opposer comme une armée invincible à la jalousie, & à la malignité du démon. Il soûhaitta qu'ils décidassent premiérement les questions contestées, & qu'ensuite ils célébrassent la Dédicace de l'Eglise de Jérusalem. Il leur ordonna pour cét effet de se rendre avec toute la diligence qu'il leur seroit possible à Tyr, Ville capitale de Phénicie, pour y terminer leurs différens, la loi de Dieu ne permettant pas que ceux qui sont animez de haine contre leurs freres, entreprennent de lui offrir des sacrifices. L'Empereur aiant toûjours les préceptes de cette loi devant les yeux, les representoit aux saints Ministres de l'Eglise. Et c'est pour cela qu'il écrivit la lettre qui suit, à ceux qui selon ses ordres, s'étoient assemblez à Tyr.

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CHAPITRE XLII.

Lettre de l'Empereur Constantin au Concile de Tyr.

Constantin Vainqueur, tres-Grand, Auguste : au saint Concile assemblé dans la Ville de Tyr.

„ La prospérité dont nôtre siécle joüit, sembloit desirer que l'Eglise Catholique fût „ exemte de troubles, & que les serviteurs de „ Dieu fussent au dessus des affronts, & des in- „ sultes. Mais puisque quelques-uns étant agitez „ par un violent desir de contester, & menant „ une vie, s'il est permis de le dire, indigne de „ la sainteté de leur profession, s'efforcent de „ nous remplir de confusion, & de desordre, ce „ que je regarde comme le plus funeste malheur „ qui pût jamais arriver; je vous exhorte de vous „ assembler promtement, comme je sai que vous „ le desirez, de soûtenir ceux qui ont besoin de „ vôtre appui, de guérir par des remédes conve- „ nables les maladies spirituelles de vos freres, „ de réünir les membres divisez du corps de l'E- „ glise, de corriger les desordres, pendant que „ le tems vous le permet, & de rendre à tant de „ Provinces, la paix que l'orgueil & l'insolence „ d'un petit nombre de personnes leur a ôtée. „ Tout le monde demeurera aisément d'accord „ que vous ne sauriez jamais rien faire qui soit si „ agréable à Dieu, si conforme à mes intentions, „ & si glorieux pour vous-mémes. Ne différez „ point. Redoublez, s'il est possible, vôtre ar- „ deur, & terminez vos différens avec la sincé- „ rité & la bonne foi que le Sauveur nous recom- mande

„ mande si fort de garder dans toutes nos actions. „ Je ne manquerai à rien de ce que je pourrai faire „ à l'avantage de nôtre Religion. J'ai déja satis- „ fait à tout ce que vous avez demandé par vos let- „ tres. J'ai écrit aux Evêques, comme vous l'a- „ vez souhaité, pour les avertir de s'assembler, „ & de partager avec vous le soin des affaires de „ l'Eglise. J'ai aussi envoié Denys qui a été au- „ tre-fois Consul, pour remontrer aux Evêques, „ qui se doivent trouver avec vous, quels sont „ leurs devoirs, pour voir ce qui se passera, & „ pour prendre garde, qu'il ne se passe rien contre „ l'ordre ni contre la modestie. Que si quelqu'un „ est si hardi que de mépriser mes ordres, ce que je „ ne croi pas devoir arriver, & de refuser d'assi- „ ster au Concile, j'envoierai des Officiers qui le „ conduiront en exil, & lui apprendront à ne plus „ desobéir aux ordres que l'Empereur donne pour „ l'intérêt de la vérité. Il ne reste plus rien à faire à „ vôtre sainteté que d'apporter des remedes con- „ venables aux fautes qui ont été commises par „ ignorance, que de suivre les régles que les „ Apôtres vous ont laissées, sans juger ni par „ haine, ni par faveur, afinque vous effaciez la „ honte de l'Eglise, que vous me délivriez de „ mes plus cuisantes inquiétudes, & que vous re- „ leviez vous-mêmes vôtre propre réputation. Je „ prie Dieu, mes tres-chers freres, qu'il vous „ conserve.

CHAPITRE XLIII.

Assemblée des Evêques à Jérusalem.

Les Evêques étoient occupez à l'exécution de ce qui leur étoit prescrit par cette lettre, lorsqu'ils reçurent ordre de la part de l'Empereur de

se rendre promtement à Jérusalem. Ils partirent à l'heure-même de la capitale de Phénicie, & firent le voiage avec des voitures publiques. La Ville de Jérusalem fut bien-tôt remplie des plus célébres Evêques des principales Provinces de l'Empire. La Macédoine y avoit envoié le Pasteur de sa Métropole. La Pannonie & la Moësie avoient choisi la fleur du troupeau. La Perse avoit député l'ornement de son Clergé, un homme qui avoit joint une profonde doctrine à une éminente sainteté. Les Pasteurs des Eglises de Bithynie & de Thrace honorérent l'assemblée par leur presence. Les plus illustres de Cilicie s'y trouvérent. Ceux qui dans la Cappadoce, surpassoient ceux de leur Province en sience, ou en éloquence, y parurent avec beaucoup d'éclat. Enfin ceux de Syrie, de Mésopotamie, de Phénicie, d'Arabie, de Palestine, d'Egypte, de Libye, & de la Thébaïde, achevérent de remplir le lieu qui leur avoit été préparé. Il n'y avoit aucun de ces Evêques, qui n'eût été suivi par une grande multitude du peuple de son Diocése. Il y avoit des Officiers de la Cour, qui avoient charge de les recevoir, & de faire toutes les dépenses nécessaires, pour rendre la cérémonie une des plus belles qui eût jamais été.

CHAPITRE XLIV.

Accueil fait aux Evêques. Aumônes distribuées aux pauvres. Presens offerts à l'Eglise.

MARIEN homme tres-affectionné au service de l'Empereur, tres-recommandable par l'ardeur de sa piété, & par la connoissance qu'il avoit aquise de l'Ecriture, & encore plus par la générosité avec laquelle il avoit soûtenu la foi durant la rigueur des persécutions, reçut tres-civile-

ment

ment les Evêques, les traita magnifiquement. Il subvint aux besoins d'un grand nombre de pauvres tant hommes que femmes, & leur fournit des vêtemens, & des vivres. Il para aussi l'Eglise de toute sorte de riches ornemens.

CHAPITRE XLV.

Discours prononcez par les Evêques. Autres fonctions exercées par ceux qui n'étoient pas accoûtumez à parler en public.

Les sacrez ministres de Dieu contribuérent chacun à l'envi, les uns par l'assiduité de leurs priéres, & les autres par l'élégance de leurs discours à accroître la solemnité de la Fête. Il y en eut qui relevérent par leurs loüanges la piété que l'Empereur faisoit paroître envers le Sauveur. Il y en eut qui décrivirent la beauté, & la magnificence de l'Eglise, qu'il avoit élevée en son honneur. Les autres expliquérent la doctrine de nôtre Religion en un sens qui avoit du rapport à la cérémonie du jour. Les autres interprétérent l'Ecriture, & en découvrirent les mystéres les plus cachez. Ceux qui n'avoient pas les talens nécessaires pour s'aquiter de ces fonctions éclatantes, appaisérent la colére de Dieu par les sacrifices non sanglans qu'ils lui offrirent pour la paix générale de l'Etat, pour la tranquillité particuliére de l'Eglise, pour la prospérité de l'Empereur qui leur avoit procuré tant d'avantages, & pour celle des Princes ses enfans. Pour moi qui reçus en cette occasion de plus grands honneurs que je ne mérite, je fus emploié à publier la devotion & la libéralité de Constantin, à décrire la variété merveilleuse des ornemens dont il avoit enrichi l'Eglise, dont nous faisions la dédicace, & à trouver

dans les expressions figurées des Prophétes, un sens qui pût être appliqué avec quelque justesse à la cérémonie qui nous assembloit.

CHAPITRE XLVI.

Description de l'Eglise de Jérusalem, faite par Eusébe.

J'AI représenté dans un autre ouvrage la structure de l'Eglise consacrée à l'honneur du Sauveur, la figure de la sainte caverne, la beauté de ces ouvrages, & la multitude des presens soit en or, en argent, ou en pierreries. Je le dédiai à l'Empereur, & je le mettrai à la fin de ce livre avec la harangue que je prononçai bien-tôt aprés à Constantinople dans la trentiéme année du régne de Constantin. Ce fut la seconde fois que j'eus l'honneur de publier les loüanges de Dieu dans le Palais de ce Prince. Il m'écouta avec une satisfaction nompareille, comme il le témoigna durant le festin qu'il fit le même jour aux Evêques.

CHAPITRE XLVII.

Tems de la célébration du Concile de Nicée; & de la dédicace de l'Eglise de Jérusalem.

CE second Concile que l'Empereur avoit convoqué dans la Ville de Jérusalem fut le plus nombreux de tous ceux dont j'aie connoissance, aprés cét autre si célébre qui avoit été à Nicée Ville fameuse de Bithynie. Celui-ci avoit été tenu en la vintiéme année de son régne, comme pour rendre graces à Dieu des victoires qu'il lui avoit accordées, & l'autre dans la trentiéme pour célébrer la

la dédicace de l'Eglise de Jérusalem qui étoit comme un present qu'il offroit au Sauveur, en reconnoissance de la paix dont joüissoit tout l'Empire.

CHAPITRE XLVIII.

Modestie de Constantin.

APRE'S que la cérémonie fut achevée, comme il n'y avoit personne qui ne s'efforçât de relever par des éloges extraordinaires la vertu incomparable de l'Empereur, il y eut un Evêque qui eut la hardiesse de lui dire qu'il étoit tres-heureux, puisqu'il joüissoit en cette vie de l'Empire de l'Univers, & qu'il posséderoit en l'autre avec le fils de Dieu un Empire qui n'a point de fin. Constantin rejetta cette loüange, & exhorta celui qui la lui avoit donnée, de prier Dieu pour lui, qu'il lui fît la grace de l'admettre & dans ce monde, & dans l'autre au nombre de ses serviteurs.

CHAPITRE XLIX.

Mariage de Constance.

LORSQUE la trentiéme année de son régne fut achevée il fit la cérémonie des Nôces de Constance son second fils. Il avoit fait dés-auparavant celles de l'aîné. Il fit de magnifiques festins, conduisit lui-même son fils, reçut d'un côté les hommes, & de l'autre les dames de la premiére qualité, & distribua de riches presens aux peuples.

CHAPITRE L.

Ambassadeurs envoyez par les Indiens.

Les Ambassadeurs des Indiens arrivérent au même-tems avec des pierreries de grand prix, & des animaux d'une espéce différente de ceux de ces païs-ci, pour témoigner à l'Empereur le respect que les principaux de leur nation avoient pour lui, & dont ils donnoient des marques publiques par le soin qu'ils prenoient de graver son image & d'élever en divers endroits sa statuë. Ainsi les peuples d'Orient se soûmirent alors à sa puissance, comme ceux d'Occident s'y étoient soûmis dés le commencement de son régne.

CHAPITRE LI.

Partage de l'Empire.

Constantin aiant réduit de la sorte à son obéïssance les extrémitez de l'Univers partagea l'Empire entre ses fils. Il donna la part qu'il avoit reçuë de ses ancêtres à l'aîné, l'Orient au second, & les païs qui s'étendent entre deux au troisiéme. Il leur laissa une autre succession beaucoup plus excellente, & plus avantageuse, qui fût celle de la piété dont il leur inspira les sentimens & par lui-même, & par les Gouverneurs & les Précepteurs qu'il mit auprés d'eux. Il eut soin aussi de leur faire apprendre les belles Lettres, la Jurisprudence, la Politique, & les exercices du corps. Ils avoient tous un grand nombre d'Officiers pour les garder & pour les servir, & l'Empereur

pereur les avoit lui-même choisis selon sa connoissance qu'il avoit de leur fidélité.

CHAPITRE LII.

Sages conseils donnez par Constantin à ses enfans.

Les Césars avoient pendant leur jeunesse des Officiers qui prenoient soin de leurs affaires. Mais lorsqu'ils furent parvenus à un âge parfait, ils ne se conduisirent plus que par les conseils de l'Empereur leur pere. Tantôt il leur proposoit de vive voix son exemple, & tantôt il leur donnoit par ses lettres des préceptes de toutes les vertus nécessaires à un Prince. Il leur recommandoit sur tout de préférer la connoissance & le service du Seigneur absolu de l'Univers à toutes les grandeurs du siécle, & à la souveraine Puissance; de protéger l'Eglise & de faire profession publique de la Religion Chrétienne. Ces jeunes Princes s'élevérent d'eux-mêmes, & par l'activité de leur vertu, à une perfection plus relevée que celle à laquelle l'Empereur leur pere les excitoit. Ils eurent toûjours la loi de Dieu devant les yeux, & s'aquittérent dans leur Palais de tous les devoirs de la piété. Constantin avoit eu soin de ne leur donner aucun Officier qui ne fût Chrétien, comme il avoit observé de n'accorder les principales charges de l'armée qu'à ceux de la même Religion. Il étoit persuadé que ceux qui gardent à Dieu la fidélité qu'ils lui ont promise, ne manqueront jamais de la garder aux hommes. Lorsque ce bien-heureux Prince eut achevé d'établir de la sorte un ordre très-parfait dans son état, Dieu qui dispense les récompenses avec une sagesse

se & une équité souveraine le retira de cette vie pour lui en donner une meilleure.

CHAPITRE LIII.

Vigoureuse constitution de Constantin.

CONSTANTIN régna prés de trente deux ans, & en vêcut prés de soixante & quatre. Il conserva dans cét âge-là une santé plus vigoureuse que celle des jeunes gens, une bonne-mine qui le faisoit admirer, & des forces capables de toute sorte d'exercices, & de fatigues. Il montoit à cheval, couroit, & remportoit l'avantage dans les jeux & les combats qui n'étoient que pour le divertissement, aussi bien qu'il remportoit de véritables victoires sur de véritables ennemis.

CHAPITRE LIV.

Avarice & hypocrisie de quelques-uns.

SI Constantin avoit tous les avantages du corps, il possédoit en un degré plus éminent les vertus de l'esprit. Il avoit sur tout une douceur nompareille. Plusieurs l'en blâmérent, à-cause que les méchans en abusoient pour autoriser leurs crimes. Je suis témoin de l'insolence avec laquelle deux grands desordres régnérent en son tems, savoir une insatiable avarice qui enlevoit le bien d'autrui avec la derniére violence, & une fausse devotion qui s'introduisoit dans l'Eglise soûs l'apparence de la véritable. La bonté naturelle de l'Empereur, sa candeur, & sa franchise lui faisoient croire que des hommes dont la conduite n'étoit qu'artifice & imposture, avoient une affection sincére

à son

à son service, & une pieté solide envers Dieu. La trop bonne opinion qu'il eut de ces gens-là l'engagea en de grandes fautes, & diminua notablement sa réputation.

CHAPITRE LV.

Application continuelle de Constantin.

La justice Divine ne différa pas long-tems le châtiment de ces personnes qui avoient imposé à la bonté de Constantin. Pour lui il avoit aquis une si profonde connoissance des siences, que jusques à la fin de sa vie il composa des harangues pour l'instruction de ses sujets, & fit des loix tantôt pour le réglement des gens de guerre, tantôt pour la décision des affaires civiles, ou pour d'autres nécessitez publiques. Sur la fin de sa vie, il prononça une oraison funébre, où il parla fort au long de l'immortalité de l'ame, des récompenses que Dieu a préparées à ceux qui le servent, & de la mort éternelle, à laquelle il condamnera les impies. Il prêchoit ces importantes véritez avec une véhémence qui étonnoit toute sa Cour. Il demanda un jour à un homme de qualité, dont il connoissoit la vanité, quel jugement il faisoit de ses discours. Bien que cét homme-là fut encore engagé dans les erreurs du paganisme, il avoüa, qu'il ne trouvoit rien à redire aux raisons que l'Empereur avoit proposées contre la pluralité des Dieux. Il sembloit se disposer à une sainte mort par ces exercices de pieté.

CHAPITRE LVI.

Constantin se prépare à la guerre par des actions de piété.

Je ne dois pas oublier de dire que la nouvelle étant arrivée d'un soulévement de quelques peuples d'Orient, l'Empereur se resolut de prendre les armes contre eux, & témoigna qu'il avoit encore ces ennemis-là à vaincre. Il leva des troupes pour cét effet, communiqua son dessein à des Evêques, & les pria de le suivre, & de combattre pour lui par l'ardeur de leurs priéres. Il leur marqua à l'heure-même le chemin, par-où ils devoient aller, & fit préparer une tente en forme de chapelle, pour implorer avec eux le secours du Dieu des armées, & du Dispensateur de la victoire.

CHAPITRE LVII.

Paix accordée aux Perses.

Cependant* les Perses aiant appris que l'Empereur avoit pris les armes, & appréhendant extrémement d'en venir aux mains avec lui, envoiérent lui demander la paix. Il la leur accorda tres-volontiers, & renvoia leurs Ambassadeurs tres-satis-faits. Comme c'étoit alors le tems de la fête de Pâques, il passa la nuit en priéres avec les Fidéles.

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CHAPITRE LVIII.

Eglises bâties en l'honneur des Apôtres dans Constantinople.

L'Empereur éleva bien-tôt aprés une Eglise dans Constantinople, pour honorer la mémoire des Apôtres. Les murailles étoient revêtuës de marbre depuis le pavé jusques à la couverture; au dessus étoit un lambris de menuiserie tout doré. L'Eglise étoit couverte de cuivre au lieu de tuiles. Il étoit doré en quelques endroits & jettoit un éclat merveilleux, qui ébloüissoit ceux qui le regardoient. Le Dome étoit couvert de cuivre, & d'or cizelé avec beaucoup d'adresse.

CHAPITRE LIX.

Suite de la même description.

Cette Eglise étoit bâtie au milieu d'une grande place, aux quatre côtez de laquelle il y avoit quatre galeries. Il y avoit de plus des bains & des maisons, pour loger les Ministres de l'Eglise, qui étoient d'une étenduë égale à celle des galeries.

CHAPITRE LX.

Tombeau de Constantin.

L'Empereur éleva ce magnifique édifice pour honorer la mémoire des Apôtres du Sauveur. Mais en cela-même il avoit un autre

dessein, qu'il tint long-tems secret, & qu'il ne découvrit que sur la fin de sa vie. Il souhaitoit que son corps y fût mis aprés sa mort, afin d'avoir part aux priéres qui y seroient faites en l'honneur de ces premiers prédicateurs de l'Evangile. Il fit élever son tombeau au milieu de douze autres qu'il avoit fait élever en forme de colonnes, en l'honneur des douze Apôtres. Dieu favorisa ses loüables intentions. Car aprés qu'il eut célébré la fête de Pâques avec les exercices ordinaires de la piété Chrétienne, & les marques d'une réjouïssance publique, Dieu, dont il procuroit la gloire par ces devoirs de Religion, eut la bonté de l'appeler à une vie plus heureuse que celle qu'il menoit sur la terre.

CHAPITRE LXI.

Maladie de Constantin.

Ce Prince fut d'abord attaqué d'une légére indisposition, & ensuite d'une dangereuse maladie. Il alla aussi-tôt aux bains chauds. Puis il se rendit à Hélénopole, où il fit de longues priéres dans l'Eglise des martyrs. Lorsqu'il se sentit proche de sa fin, il crut devoir expier ses péchez, & ne douta point qu'ils ne dussent étre effacez par la force ineffable des paroles du bâtéme. Il se mit à genoux dans l'Eglise, confessa ses fautes, en demanda pardon à Dieu, & reçut la premiére imposition des mains. Etant ensuite allé à un faux-bourg de Nicomédie, il envoia quérir les Evêques, & leur parla de cette sorte.

CHAPITRE LXII.

Discours par lequel Constantin demande le Bâtéme.

» Voici le tems que j'ai désiré avec passion, » & auquel j'ai espéré d'être sauvé. Voici le » tems de recevoir le signe de l'immortalité & le » seau du salut. J'avois autrefois resolu de le rece- » voir dans le fleuve du Jourdain à l'imitation du » Sauveur, qui y reçut le Bâtéme. Mais Dieu qui » sait ce qui m'est le plus avantageux, a agréable » que je le reçoive en ce lieu-ci. Ne différons plus. » Si Dieu qui est l'arbitre de la vie, & de la mort, » me laisse encore ici bas quelques années pour le » prier au milieu des Fidéles, je me prescrirai une » maniére de vivre tout-à-fait conforme à la sain- » teté de ses loix.

Aprés qu'il eût parlé de la sorte, les Evêques firent sur lui les saintes cérémonies, lui conférérent les sacrez mystéres, & lui prescrivirent les régles qu'il devoit garder. Ainsi il fut le premier de tous les Empereurs, qui reçut une naissance nouvelle, & une vie spirituelle dans l'Eglise des Martyrs, qui fut rempli de l'Esprit saint, & éclairé d'une lumiére celeste. L'ardeur de sa foi le combloit d'une joie que l'on ne peut exprimer, & les miracles que la divine puissance opéroit en sa faveur, le ravissoient en admiration. Dés que la cérémonie eut été achevée, il fut revêtu d'une robe, dont la blancheur éclatoit comme le Soleil, se coucha, & ne voulut jamais depuis mettre sa robe de pourpre.

CHAPITRE LXIII.

Actions de graces renduës à Dieu par Constantin.

Il éleva incontinent aprés sa voix, pour rendre à Dieu ses actions de graces, & lorsqu'il les „ eut achevées, il prononça ces paroles. Je recon„ nois maintenant le bon-heur que j'ai d'avoir re„ çu la lumiére de la foi, & le droit à la vie éter„ nelle. Il déploroit le mal-heur de ceux qui étoient exclus de ces biens. Les Officiers de son armée étant allez le saluër, & lui aiant témoigné combien ils appréhendoient de le perdre, & combien ils desiroient que Dieu prolongeât sa vie, il leur répondit qu'il commençoit à joüir de la véritable vie, & qu'il connoissoit seul la valeur des biens que Dieu venoit de lui faire, & qu'il souhaitoit avec impatience de les posséder. Il disposa ensuite de ses affaires, ordonna que châque année certains presens seroient donnez en son nom aux habitans de Constantinople, partagea les Provinces entre ses enfans, & laissa encore d'autres ordres selon qu'il le jugea à propos.

CHAPITRE LXIV.

Mort de Constantin.

L'Empereur fit tout ce que je viens de dire, au tems de la solennité de la Pentecôte, dont la célébration se consomme au jour qui suit les sept semaines d'aprés la Resurrection du Sauveur, & auquel il monta au ciel, & envoia son Esprit saint sur la terre selon le témoignage de l'Ecriture. Le dernier jour de cette fête que l'on peut appeler

la

la plus grande de toutes, Constantin expira sur le midi, laissant aux hommes son corps, & rendant à Dieu son ame, qui étoit pleine de sa connoissance & de son amour. Voila quelle fut la fin de ce Prince. Mais voions la suite.

CHAPITRE LXV.

Regrets des gens de guerre.

Les Gardes déchirérent à l'heure-même leurs vêtemens, se prosternérent, se cognérent la tête contre le plancher, remplirent le Palais de gémissemens, & de cris, & pleurérent la mort de l'Empereur avec la même tendresse que les enfans pleurent la mort de leur pere. Les Tribuns & les Centeniers publiérent les bienfaits & les faveurs qu'ils avoient reçuës de sa bonté. Les soldats le regrêtérent comme un troupeau abandonné regrette son Pasteur. Le peuple répandu dans les ruës, donna toute sorte de marques de sa douleur. Plusieurs étoient pâles & étonnez, & il n'y avoit personne qui ne prît part à la perte publique.

CHAPITRE LXVI.

Funérailles de Constantin.

Les gens de guerre ôtérent le corps de dessus le lit pour le mettre dans un cercuëil d'or, & le portérent dans une des plus belles chambres du Palais de Constantinople. On alluma une si prodigieuse quantité de cierges tout-au-tour, que jamais on n'avoit vû rien de pareil. Les Gardes veilloient jour & nuit autour du corps.

CHA-

CHAPITRE LXVII.

Honneurs rendus à Constantin aprés sa mort.

Les Officiers de l'armée, les Comtes & les Magistrats alloient à certaines heures saluer l'Empereur de la même façon qu'ils avoient accoûtumé de le saluer durant sa vie. Les Sénateurs y alloient ensuite selon leur rang, & le peuple y accouroit en foule pour voir la cérémonie. Elle dura fort long-tems, parce que les gens de guerre avoient resolu de garder de la sorte le corps de Constantin jusques à ce que les Princes ses enfans fussent de retour, & qu'ils pussent assister à la pompe funébre. Ainsi ce célébre Empereur eut seul l'avantage de gouverner aprés sa mort avec un pouvoir aussi absolu, qu'il avoit gouverné pendant sa vie. Dieu lui fit cét honneur qu'il n'avoit fait à aucun de ses prédecesseurs, en récompense des honneurs qu'il avoit reçus de lui, & qu'il n'avoit reçus d'aucun autre Prince. Il n'y a personne qui pour peu qu'il ait de lumiére ne juge, que l'ame de nôtre incomparable Empereur posséde dans le Ciel un Roiaume éternel, puisque son corps a conservé sur la terre aprés sa mort, le même commandement que pendant sa vie.

CHAPITRE LXVIII.

Proclamation des fils de Constantin.

Les Tribuns choisirent parmi les Officiers de l'armée ceux qui avoient autrefois paru les plus affectionnez au service du feu Empereur, & les envoiérent aux Princes ses enfans pour les informer

former de tout ce qui étoit arrivé. Mais dés que la nouvelle de la mort de l'Empereur eut été portée aux troupes qui étoient dans les Provinces, à l'heure-même, comme si elles eussent été animées du même esprit, de ne reconnoître pour Empereur aucun autre que ses enfans; elles commencérent à les appeler Empereurs au lieu de les appeler Césars, comme auparavant. Elles s'écrivirent les unes aux autres, & ainsi l'intention des gens de guerre fut connuë en peu de tems dans toute l'étenduë de l'Empire.

CHAPITRE LXIX.

Deuil public à Rome.

Dés que la triste nouvelle de la mort de Constantin eut été portée à Rome, le Sénat, & le Peuple s'abandonna à la douleur. Les bains furent fermez, les marchez interdits, les jeux, les spectacles, & les autres divertissemens cessérent. Il n'y avoit personne qui ne portât les marques de la tristesse publique, & qui ne publiât les loüanges du feu Empereur. Plusieurs voulurent avoir son portrait, & quelques-uns le representérent dans le Ciel, où il joüit d'une félicité éternelle. Ils proclamérent les Princes ses enfans seuls Empereurs, & démandérent avec des instances tres-pressantes que le corps fût apporté à leur Ville.

CHAPITRE LXX.

Déposition du corps de Constantin.

CONSTANCE second fils de Constantin étant arrivé à Constantinople y fit la cérémonie de la pompe funébre. Il marchoit le premier; avoit derriére lui les Compagnies des gens de guerre suivis d'une foule innombrable de peuple. Les Gardes étoient autour du corps. Il fut déposé dans l'Eglise des saints Apôtres.

CHAPITRE LXXI.

Priéres faites pour Constantin.

LORS que Constance se fut retiré avec les gens de guerre, les sacrez ministres de l'Eglise commencérent les priéres avec le peuple, & les entrecoupérent par leurs soûpirs, & par leurs larmes. Dieu reconnut la fidélité des services de ce Prince par la grace qu'il lui fit de lui donner ses enfans pour successeurs, & de permettre que son corps fût déposé (comme il avoit souhaité) dans l'Eglise des saints Apôtres, qu'il participât aux priéres qui y seroient faites par les fidéles, & qu'il conservât en quelque sorte aprés sa mort une autorité absoluë.

CHA-

CHAPITRE LXXII.

Comparaison du Phénix & du Froment.

CONSTANTIN fut en cela semblable non à cét oiseau d'Egypte que l'on dit se consumer soi-même sur un bucher de parfums, & renaître de ses cendres; mais au Sauveur, qui aiant été semé comme un grain de froment se multiplie par la bénédiction du Ciel, & produit des épics qui couvrent toute la terre. L'Empereur vit de la sorte dans ses enfans, gouverne soûs leur nom, & paroît avec eux dans les tableaux & dans les autres ouvrages.

CHAPITRE LXXIII.

Image de Constantin gravée sur la monnoie.

ON fit des médailles en son honneur, où il étoit representé la tête couverte, & au revers assis sur un char, avec une main qui sortoit d'un nuage & qui s'étendoit comme pour l'attirer au Ciel.

CHAPITRE LXXIV.

Piété de Constantin récompensée.

DIEU a marqué tres-clairement dans les circonstances que je viens de representer la différence qu'il y a entre les Princes qui le servent, & ceux qui se déclarent contre lui. Il a laissé éclater

éclater ſa colére à la mort des Empereurs qui lui avoient fait la guerre, au lieu qu'il n'a donné que des preuves de ſa bonté à la mort de Conſtantin, qui lui avoit toûjours été tres-fidéle.

CHAPITRE LXXV.

Suite de la comparaiſon de Conſtantin, & des autres Empereurs.

COMME il avoit ſeul aboli la ſuperſtition & autoriſé la piété, il reçut ſeul, & dés cette vie, & dans l'autre une récompenſe dont nul autre n'a jamais été honoré ſoit parmi les Grecs, ou parmi les étrangers. Enfin il a été ſi célébre que l'ancienne Rome n'a jamais produit aucun Prince, qu'elle lui puiſſe comparer.



DIS-



DISCOURS DE L'EMPEREUR CONSTANTIN,

Addressé à l'Assemblée des Fidéles.

CHAPITRE PREMIER.

Préface sur la Fête de Pâques. Sur la bonté du Sauveur, & l'ingratitude des hommes.

La lumiére extraordinaire que le Soleil répand en ce jour est comme le prélude de la Résurrection, le commencement de la réparation de nos corps, le gage de la gloire qui nous est promise, & l'entrée à la vie éternelle où nous aspirons. Nous célébrons aujourd'hui la mémoire de la Passion du Sauveur, sacrez Pasteurs de son troupeau, mes chers amis, peuples fidéles incomparablement plus heureux que tous les autres par l'avantage que vous avez de rendre un veritable culte à Dieu qui est l'Auteur de la Religion, & de publier sans cesse ses loüanges de cœur, & de bouche. Vous

Vous ô Nature qui étes comme la mere de tous les étres, avez-vous jamais rien produit de pareil pour le bien des hommes? Ou plûtôt que leur, avez-vous procuré de semblable quand vous avez été produite, puisque vous avez été produite par celui, par qui toutes les créatures l'ont été? C'est lui de qui vous tenez tout ce que vous avez d'ornement & de beauté; Cette beauté & cét ornement consistent dans la vie, qu'il inspire. Il s'est depuis introduit un abus tout-à-fait contraire à la Nature, qui est que personne n'a rendu à Dieu les honneurs qui lui sont dûs, & qu'au lieu de reconnoître que le monde est gouverné par sa Providence, on s'est imaginé qu'il ne dépend que du hazart. Les Prophétes animez de l'esprit saint ont en vain élevé leur voix pour publier cette vérité. L'impiété l'a étoufée. Elle a rejetté la lumiére, & s'est enveloppée de ténébres. L'injustice & la violence ont accouru à son secours, & l'autorité des Princes a secondé la fureur aveugle des peuples, si elle ne l'a devancée. Ce desordre confirmé par une longue suite d'années a été funeste aux siécles passez. Mais depuis que le Sauveur a paru, l'injustice a été bannie, le calme a succédé à l'orage, & les prédictions des Prophétes ont été accomplies. Le Fils de Dieu n'est pas si-tôt rentré au Roiaume de son Pere, qu'il a établi sur la terre le temple de la vertu, une Eglise sainte, & incorruptible qui rend sans cesse & à son pere, & à lui, les devoirs, & les respects qui leur sont dûs. Il a enseigné à tout l'Univers la modération, & la tempérance. A quoi s'est portée aprés cela la malice aveugle des Nations? Elle a rejetté les bienfaits du Sauveur, & entrepris de renverser l'Eglise qu'il a fondée, & d'élever sur ses ruines l'édifice de la superstition. De-là sont venuës des nouvelles séditions, des guerres, & des combats. De-là le chagrin, le dégoût, le luxe, le desir d'amas-

d'amasser des richesses; qui étant un desir contraire à la Nature tantôt charme par de fausses espérances, & tantôt agite par de vaines craintes. Mais que ce desir céde à la vertu, qu'il soit abatu, qu'il se déchire, & qu'il se rompe lui-même. Permettez-moi cependant de vous entretenir de la doctrine que Dieu nous a enseignée.

CHAPITRE II.

Apostrophe faite à l'Eglise.

PILOTE sacré du vaisseau Mystique, qui vivez dans une pureté parfaite de cœur, & de corps, Eglise sainte qui élevez les ames foibles avec une tendresse & une charité maternelle, qui êtes pour elles comme une vive source d'où coulent les eaux du salut, peuples fidéles qui servez Dieu avec une foi sincére & qui êtes en assurance sous la protection de sa main toute-Puissante, je vous prie de me donner une favorable audiance, de faire moins d'attention à la simplicité de mon langage, qu'à la vérité, & de considérer plûtôt la pureté de mes intentions, que l'indignité de ma personne. Dequoi serviroit le discours le plus agréable, si l'on ne connoissoit la disposition intérieure de celui qui le prononce? Peut-être que mon entreprise est au dessus de mes forces. Mais la charité me presse de la faire, & chasse la pudeur qui m'auroit pû retenir. Je supplie ceux d'entre vous qui sont instruits des mystéres, de m'avertir de mes fautes, de ne pas attendre de moi des preuves d'une rare suffisance, & de se contenter de ce foible effort de ma foi. Je prie le Pere, & le Fils de m'animer de leur esprit, & de m'inspirer ce que je dois dire. Si quelqu'un prétendoit réüssir sans leur secours, ou en éloquen-

éloquence, ou en un autre art, il ne remporteroit que de la honte. Mais quiconque en est favorisé peut hardiment tout entreprendre. Excusez la longueur de cét exorde, & me permettez d'entrer dans le sujet que je me suis proposé de traiter.

CHAPITRE III.

Que Dieu est Pere de son Verbe, & l'unique Auteur de toutes les créatures.

Le bien où tendent toutes choses étant Dieu, il n'a ni commencement ni principe, & est le principe de ce qui a commencement. Celui qui procéde de lui est uni à lui. Cette procession, & cette union sont purement spirituelles, & ne se font par aucun mouvement ni aucune distance de lieu. Le Sauveur a été engendré d'une autre maniére que les enfans des hommes, & sans que le sein du pere d'où il est sorti en ait souffert aucune diminution. Il a été produit par la fécondité inépuisable de son entendement éternel pour présider à la création & au gouvernement de ce monde visible. Il est le Principe de l'Etre & de la vie de tout ce qui est renfermé dans l'étendue de cette vaste machine. C'est de lui que viennent l'ame, le sentiment, & les organes par lesquels agissent les sens. A quoi tend ce discours? Il tend à faire voir qu'il n'y a qu'un souverain Seigneur, de la puissance duquel relévent le Ciel & la Terre, la Nature, & tous les corps qui la composent. S'il y avoit plusieurs Maîtres qui présidassent à la conduite de l'univers, ils partageroient entr'eux les élémens selon ce que l'ancienne fable en a feint, & leur jalousie, leur ambition, leur avarice & leur mauvaise intelligence romproit l'harmonie

qui

qui fait le principal ornement du monde. Ce qu'il subsiste toûjours de la même sorte, est une preuve qu'il n'est gouverné que par un même esprit. S'il y avoit plusieurs principes, auquel attribuëroit-on la création de la matiére? Qui seroit ou le premier, ou le dernier d'entr'eux? Auquel les hommes adresseroient-ils leurs priéres? Comment pourrai-je honorer un Dieu, sans en deshonorer un autre? Si j'ai besoin de quelque grace, & que je remercie le Dieu qui m'aura été propice, n'offencerai-je pas celui qui m'aura été contraire? A qui m'adresserai-je quand je serai en peine de découvrir les malheurs qui me ménacent, & de m'en garantir? Supposons que les oracles qui m'auront instruit, n'ont pas le pouvoir de me préserver des maux que j'appréhende. Où sera la misericorde & la providence de Dieu sur les hommes? Il n'y en a point à espérer, si ce n'est que quelque Dieu d'une humeur plus douce & plus obligeante que les autres, n'entre en colére contre les impitoiables, & se porte à nous secourir. Il est certain que s'il y avoit plusieurs Dieux il y en auroit qui négligeroient le soin des créatures, qui leur seroient commises, qui entreprendroient sur le domaine des autres, & que de cette injustice naîtroient les haines, les inimitiez, les plaintes, les quérelles, & le plus horrible desordre que l'on se puisse imaginer. Cette division des esprits celestes seroit sans doute tres-préjudiciable aux habitans du bas monde, elle déregleroit les saisons, & produiroit la disette. Elle ôteroit la suite réciproque des jours & des nuits. En voila assez sur ce sujet. Emploions maintenant des raisons ausquelles on ne sauroit apporter aucune réponse.

CHAPITRE IV.

Aveuglement des Idolâtres.

TOUT ce qui a un commencement, a aussi une fin. Le commencement selon le tems s'appele génération. Ce qui est produit par la voie de la génération, est sujet à la corruption. Le tems efface la beauté. Comment ceux qui ont une génération & une naissance corruptible, seroient-ils immortels ? Cette opinion extravagante a prévalu parmi le peuple, que les Dieux contractent des mariages, & mettent au monde des enfans. Si de nouveaux immortels naissent châque jour, la race s'en multiplie avec un étrange excez. Où trouvera-t-on un assez vaste espace soit au ciel, ou sur la terre, pour les contenir ? Que dirons-nous des hommes qui marient les Dieux avec les Déesses leurs sœurs, & qui leur reprochent leurs débauches & leurs adultéres ? Je dirai hardiment que le culte que les hommes leur rendent, est un culte rempli d'impureté & d'infamie. Un excellent sculpteur forme un dessein dans son esprit, il l'exécute, & quand il est achevé, il le regarde avec complaisance ; & l'adore enfin comme un Dieu, bien qu'il ne sache que trop que lui-même qui a fait cét ouvrage, n'est qu'un homme. On montre les cercueïls & les tombeaux de ces immortels. On rend des honneurs divins à des morts, sans faire réfléxion que les esprits immortels n'ont point besoin des honneurs que les hommes peuvent rendre. Ce qui ne peut étre conçu que par l'esprit, n'a pas besoin d'étre represénté soûs une forme sensible. On ne fait des portraits que pour conserver la mémoire des morts. Ceux que l'on peint de la sorte, ont été autrefois des hom-

hommes, & ont eu des corps terrestres & corruptibles comme les nôtres.

CHAPTRE V.

Que le Fils de Dieu a créé le monde, & a mis des bornes certaines à la vie de tous les hommes.

Mais pourquoi est-ce que je salis par l'impureté de ces discours une langue que j'ai consacrée à la loüange du vrai Dieu ? Je veux me laver de ces ordures comme d'une eau salée & amére avec une eau douce & claire qui coule de la vive source des vertus du Dieu, dont je célébre les grandeurs. Je suis persuadé que mon devoir m'oblige à loüer Jésus-Christ par la pureté de ma vie, & par une humble reconnoissance des faveurs dont il m'a comblé. C'est lui qui a posé les fondemens de l'univers, qui a créé l'espéce des hommes, qui dés qu'ils eurent été formez, & avant qu'ils eussent aucune connoissance du bien, ou du mal, les plaça dans un lieu agréable, rempli de fleurs & de fruits. Il les mit depuis sur la terre comme dans une demeure, qui leur étoit plus convenable, & parceque'ils avoient la lumiére de la raison, il leur révéla le bien & le mal. Il leur commanda de se multiplier, & ils se répandirent sur le vaste espace qui est entouré de l'Océan, & qui joüit d'un air fort tempéré & fort propre à la conservation de la santé. A mesure que les hommes se sont accrus, ils ont inventé les arts, qui leur étoient nécessaires ; les animaux dont les espéces sont différentes, se sont accrus à proportion : Les uns sont apprivoisez, & obéïssent à l'homme : Les autres sont farouches, & ont en partage, ou la force pour surmonter leurs ennemis, ou la légéreté & la vitesse, pour

s'éloigner du péril. Dieu mit les animaux privez & domestiques soûs la protection de l'homme, & lui permit de poursuivre les farouches, & de leur faire la guerre. Dieu fit aprés cela les oiseaux, dont le nombre est si prodigieux, les espéces si diverses, les couleurs si bizares, & de quelques-uns desquels le chant est si agréable. Il acheva le grand ouvrage de l'univers par la formation des autres animaux à sa vie desquels il mit des bornes.

CHAPITRE VI.

De la destinée.

La plupart des hommes attribuënt par ignorance la création du monde, & la disposition des parties qui le composent, à la nature, à la destinée ou au hazart. Ceux qui l'attribuënt à la destinée, ne prennent pas garde qu'ils prononcent des paroles, ausquelles ils ne sauroient donner aucun sens. Car si la nature a produit toutes choses, que sera-ce que la destinée, ou si la loi de la destinée est une loi immuable, de quoi servira la nature ? Il n'y a point de loi qui ne vienne d'un législateur. Ainsi si la destinée est une loi, elle vient de Dieu, & elle dépend de sa puissance. Si l'on prétend que la destinée est la même chose que la volonté de Dieu, nous n'y trouverons rien à redire. Comment la justice, la tempérance, & les autres vertus dépendroient-elles de la destinée ? L'injustice, l'intempérance & les autres vices en dépendroient-ils aussi ? La malice procéde de la volonté, & non pas de la destinée. La vertu est une action qui a rapport aux bonnes mœurs. Si les bonnes & les mauvaises actions dépendoient de la destinée, ce seroit par un effet de la destinée & du hazart que l'on rendroit la justice. Dira-t-on que les

les loix, que les discours qui excitent les hommes à la vertu, & qui les détournent du vice, que les loüanges & les réprimandes; que les châtimens & les récompenses ne viennent que du hazart, au lieu de reconnoître qu'ils ne viennent que de la justice & de la providence de Dieu? C'est lui qui traite les hommes, de la maniére qu'ils le méritent, soit qu'il leur envoie les maladies contagieuses, la guerre, la stérilité & la disette, ou qu'il leur accorde la santé, le repos & l'abondance. Ces châtimens & ces récompenses sont comme des voix par lesquelles il nous avertit de nôtre devoir. Il se plaît à la vertu, & déteste les crimes. Il chérit ceux qui ont de la modestie, & mêprise ceux qui s'enflent d'orguëil, & qui s'élévent. Bien que cette vérité soit tres-évidente, nous la comprendrons beaucoup plus clairement, si nous nous donnons le loisir d'y faire une attention particuliére. C'est pourquoi nous devons nous conduire avec une grande modération, ne concevoir jamais aucun sentiment de vanité, & songer souvent que nous ne faisons aucune action, dont Dieu ne soit témoin.

Nous pouvons encore examiner par un autre moien, si le sentiment de ceux qui soûtiennent que ce n'est que par un effet du hazart que les parties de l'univers ont été rangées dans l'ordre, où nous les voions, est appuié sur un fondement qui ait quelque solidité. Peut-on se persuader que les cieux & les astres, que les élémens, la terre, l'eau, le feu & l'air ont été produits par accident, & par un evenement fortuit? Peut-on attribuer à la même témérité le retour si juste de l'Hiver, & de l'Eté, & l'ordre des saisons? Il y a des personnes si téméraires & si indiscrétes que d'assurer, que les hommes ont inventé toutes ces choses pour leur usage. Cela se peut dire avec quelque apparence de raison, des biens que la nature nous fournit.

Mais peut-on penser que ceux qui de leur nature sont éternels & immuables aient été inventez par les hommes ? Ceux qui sont éloignez de nos sens, & qui ne peuvent être connus que par l'esprit, sont les ouvrages, non d'une créature aussi grossiére que l'homme, mais d'une sagesse éternelle & infinie. L'ordre merveilleux de la nature, la succession continuelle des jours & des nuits, la multitude des étoiles qui en dissipent l'obscurité, les diverses faces de la Lune, l'accroissement & la diminution de sa splendeur, à mesure qu'elles s'éloigne du Soleil, ou qu'elle s'en approche, ne sont-ce pas autant de preuves de la providence ? Le juste degré de chaleur avec laquelle le Soleil meurit les fruits, le soufle des vens qui nettoient l'air, la chûte des pluïes qui rafraichissent la terre, l'union & l'harmonie qui lie & qui entretient les piéces de cette vaste machine, le mouvement des planétes & des étoiles sont des effets sensibles de l'obéïssance, que toutes les créatures rendent à une loi souveraine & divine. Peut-on dire que les montagnes aient été élevées, les vallées creusées, & les plaines étenduës par un autre ordre que par celui de la providence ? La disposition de ces parties de l'univers n'est pas seulement agréable à voir, elle est commode pour l'usage. L'inégalité des terres, dont les unes portent des grains utiles à la vie, & les autres portent d'autres espéces qui se débitent dans les païs étrangers, est un autre argument, par où l'on démontre que Dieu préside à la conduite de tout ce qui se fait ici bas. Oserons-nous dire que c'est par hazart que les montagnes renferment les eaux dans leur sein, qu'elles les répandent dans les plaines & les vallées, & que la terre, aprés en avoir été suffisamment arrosée, s'en décharge dans l'Océan ? Nous ne saurions dire ce que c'est que ce hazart, parceque l'on ne peut ni le voir, ni le connoître. C'est un son vain & inutile.

inutile. C'est un bruit qui frappe nos oreilles. C'est un nom qui ne signifie rien.

CHAPITRE VII.

Que les choses qui sont au dessus de nôtre esprit, doivent être attribuées à la sagesse de Dieu, & non à aucune cause fortuite.

Le mot de hazart est un mot inventé à plaisir par des hommes, qui ne pouvant rendre de raison des évenemens qu'ils voioient, ont dit qu'ils arrivoient sans raison. Il faut avoüer qu'il y a des véritez cachées, & que la nature a des secrets. Il n'est pas aisé de découvrir les causes de tous les effets qui tombent soûs les sens. Il y a peu de personnes qui puissent dire d'où vient la chaleur de certaines eaux, & comment le feu se conserve au milieu de son contraire. Ces effets extraordinaires de la nature sont, à mon sens, des preuves convainquantes de la providence, dont la puissance éclate à faire couler de la même source, deux choses aussi opposées que sont le froid & le chaud. Elle a fait aux hommes divers presens, dont les uns servent à les consoler dans leurs afflictions, & les autres à les délasser de leurs travaux. La vigne & l'olivier sont de cette sorte. Le fruit de la premiére donne de la joie. Celui du second est emploié dans les remédes, & contribue souvent à la guérison. Le cours continuel des fleuves qui est une image de l'éternité, la succession perpétuelle des jours & des nuits sont des sujets dignes d'admiration.

CHAPITRE VIII.

Que Dieu accorde largement aux hommes ce qui est nécessaire pour la conservation de leur vie, au lieu qu'il ne leur donne qu'avec réserve ce qui ne sert qu'à entretenir leurs plaisirs.

J'AI cru devoir produire ces preuves pour faire voir que rien ne se fait sans raison, & sans un ordre exprés qui vient de Dieu. Il a produit l'or, l'argent, le cuivre & les autres métaux d'une maniére fort convenable, & avec une différence dont le fondement est fort solide. Il a accordé en plus grande quantité, ceux dont on a plus grand besoin, & dont l'usage est le plus ordinaire, au lieu qu'il n'a donné qu'avec une modération fort éloignée de la profusion, ceux qui ne servent qu'au divertissement & au luxe. Si l'or, & l'argent avoient été si communs on auroit négligé le fer & le cuivre qui sont si nécessaires pour labourer la terre, & pour bâtir des maisons, & des vaisseaux ; & on n'auroit recherché que des richesses superfluës. C'est par l'effet d'une grande sagesse que Dieu a voulu que l'or, & l'argent fussent rares & mal-aisez à trouver, & qu'il a opposé un travail aussi pénible qu'est celui de ces mines, à un desir aussi violent qu'est celui d'amasser des tresors. Il seroit aisé de produire beaucoup d'autres preuves du soin que Dieu a eu en nous distribuant ses faveurs de nous en enseigner le légitime usage, & de modérer nos cupiditez. Les motifs de cette conduite sont fort secrets, & peut-être impénétrables à l'esprit de l'homme. Sa foiblesse ne lui permet pas de comprendre la vérité, ni d'approfondir les desseins de Dieu.

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CHAPITRE IX.

Des erreurs des Philosophes. De la doctrine de Platon.

Ce que je viens de dire fait voir que nous ne devons entreprendre que ce qui est possible, & proportionné à nos forces. Les fausses couleurs qui sont emploiées dans les dialogues imposent à un grand nombre de personnes, & leur dérobent la connoissance de la vérité. Elles l'ont dérobée à plusieurs Philosophes qui recherchoient les secrets de la Nature, & ne les pouvant trouver, ont obscurci la vérité par leur maniére de discourir. C'est de-là que sont venus la diversité de leurs opinions, la chaleur de leurs disputes, les séditions des peuples qui ont pris un trop grand intérêt dans leurs contestations, les condamnations rigoureuses que les Princes ont prononcées contre eux dans la créance qu'ils avoient dessein d'ébranler les loix fondamentales de l'Etat, & d'abolir les coûtumes les plus sagement établies. C'est aussi ce qui a causé la ruine de plusieurs d'entre eux. Socrate étant enflé de l'avantage qu'il avoit à raisonner, & de la subtilité avec laquelle il donnoit de la force aux plus foibles argumens, & se joüoit de l'ignorance de ses auditeurs, excita la jalousie de ses Citoiens qui le firent mourir. Pythagore qui faisoit une profession particuliére de garder la tempérance, & le silence, fut convaincu de mauvaise foi, & d'imposture. Il expliqua aux Italiens les secrets qu'il avoit appris en Egypte par la lecture des Prophétes, & tâcha de faire accroire que Dieu les lui avoit révélez. Platon qui a surpassé tous les autres en honnêteté, & en douceur, & qui a le premier accoûtumé les hommes

à élever leur esprit au dessus des choses sensibles, & à l'attacher aux intelligibles, a enseigné que Dieu est au dessus de toutes les substances. Il les a aussi distinguées en deux substances, bien qu'elles soient la même perfection, & que la substance du premier Dieu procéde de celle du second. Le premier est l'Auteur, & le Modérateur de tous les étres, & n'a rien au dessus de soi. Le second obéït à ses ordres, & lui rapporte la création du monde, comme au premier Principe. Ainsi selon la plus exacte Philosophie, il n'y a que le Verbe qui ait soin des créatures & qui préside à leur conduite. Ce Verbe est tout ensemble Dieu, & Fils de Dieu. Car quel autre nom pourroit-on lui donner, que celui de Fils, sans faire une fort grande faute; puisque le Pere de tous est aussi le Pere de son Verbe? Platon n'a rien avancé jusques ici que de conforme à la vérité. Mais quand il a introduit plusieurs Dieux, & qu'il leur a attribué diverses formes, il est tombé dans des erreurs fort grossiéres. Il a même fait tomber les ignorans en d'autres erreurs plus dangereuses, & a été cause qu'au lieu d'admirer la Providence de Dieu, ils ont révéré des Images d'hommes & d'animaux. Ainsi ce Philosophe d'un si excellent esprit, & d'une si profonde doctrine a mêlé le mensonge avec la vérité. Il me semble pourtant qu'il se rétracte, & se corrige lui-même quand il dit qu'une ame raisonnable est l'esprit de Dieu. Il range tous les Etres en deux classes. Les intelligibles sont dans la premiére, & les sensibles dans la seconde. Les premiers sont spirituels, & simples, les seconds sont corporels, & composez. Les premiers sont l'objet de l'esprit, & les seconds sont le sujet de l'opinion & des sens. Les premiers participent à l'esprit de Dieu, & à une vie éternelle. Les seconds périssent & se détruisent de la même sorte qu'ils ont été composez. Ce que Platon enseigne ensuite, est tout-à

fait

fait merveilleux, qu'aussi-tôt que les ames des personnes de vertu sont séparées de leurs corps, elles sont reçuës dans une demeure fort agréable. Il n'y a rien de si utile que cette doctrine. Car ceux qui en sont persuadez, & qui se promettent ce bonheur s'adonnent à la vertu, & s'éloignent du vice. Il ajoûte enfin que les ames des méchans sont agitées par les flots de l'Achéron, & du Pyriphlégéton comme le débris d'un vaisseau, & les tristes restes d'un naufrage.

CHAPITRE X.

De ceux qui réjettent la doctrine des Philosophes aussi-bien que l'autorité de l'Ecriture. Qu'il faut ou croire tout ce que disent les Poëtes, ou ne rien croire de ce qu'ils disent.

IL s'est cependant trouvé des personnes dont l'esprit étoit si fort corrompu, que quand elles ont lû dans Platon ces importantes véritez, au lieu d'en étre épouvantées, elles n'ont fait qu'en rire & s'en moquer, comme si on ne leur eût conté que des fables. Ils loüent l'abondance du stile de ce Philosophe, & blâment la sévérité de ses sentimens. Ils ne laissent pas d'ajoûter foi aux fables, & de remplir la Gréce, & les païs étrangers des plus vaines imaginations des Poëtes. Ces Poëtes assurent que les enfans des Dieux jugeront les ames aprés la mort; & relévent avec des loüanges extraordinaires, l'intégrité qu'ils leur attribuent. Ces mêmes Poëtes décrivent les guerres, & les combats des Dieux, racontent leur fortune, & leur destinée. Ils prétendent qu'il y en a qui sont d'une humeur fort facheuse & fort incommode, qu'il y en a qui ne prennent aucun

ſoin des hommes, & qu'il y en a d'autres qui leur ſont contraires. Il y en a qui pleurent dans les poëmes la mort de leurs enfans, & qui bien loin de pouvoir aſſiſter les étrangers, déclarent qu'ils ne peuvent ſoûlager leurs proches. Ces Auteurs rendent les Dieux ſujets aux paſſions, quand ils décrivent leurs combats, leurs bleſſures, la joie du vainqueur, & la triſteſſe du vaincu. Ils ſemblent en cela dignes de créance, puiſqu'ils ne diſent que ce que leur inſpire l'eſprit Divin qui les anime. Ils rapportent auſſi les malheurs arrivez aux Dieux, & aux Démons, & ces malheurs-là ne ſont en effet que trop véritables. Quelqu'un dira peut-étre, qu'il eſt permis aux Poëtes de déguiſer la vérité par les ornemens & les figures qu'ils emploient pour donner du plaiſir à leurs lecteurs. Ceux qui déguiſent la vérité ne la déguiſent pas ſans deſſein. Les uns la déguiſent par intérêt, les autres pour cacher leurs crimes, & ſe ſouſtraire à la rigueur des loix. Il me ſemble pourtant qu'il leur étoit fort aiſé de ne rien dire que de vrai, touchant la Nature Divine.

CHAPITE XI.

De l'avenement corporel du Sauveur.

QUE ceux qui ſe ſont rendus indignes de la vertu, & qui ſe ſentent coûpables de pluſieurs crimes, tournent les yeux de leur eſprit vers Dieu, & renoncent à leurs deſordres. Ils doivent ſe contenter quand ils ne parviendroient qu'en un âge fort avancé, à la connoiſſance de la ſageſſe. Les avis, & les inſtructions des hommes ne nous ont jamais ſervi de rien. Tout ce que nous ſavons d'utile pour la reforme, ou pour la conduite de nos mœurs vient de Dieu. La connoiſſance de

de ses volontez est comme un bouclier impénétrable que je puis opposer aux traits empoisonnez du Démon. Je choisirai parmi ce que j'ai appris de lui, ce qui sera plus propre au sujet que je traite, & au dessein que j'ai entrepris, de publier ses loüanges. Eclairez-moi Divin Sauveur, de vos lumiéres, & me mettez dans la bouche des paroles dignes de vous. Que personne n'attende de moi un discours paré des ornemens de l'éloquence. Je suis persuadé que ceux qui affectent cette maniére molle & efféminée de s'exprimer, desirent plûtôt de plaire que de profiter. Il y a des personnes qui ont l'extravagance, & l'impiété d'assurer que le Sauveur a été tres-justement condamné, & exécuté à mort par ceux à qui il avoit donné la vie. Il ne faut pas s'étonner que ceux qui ont renoncé à la piété, & qui sont accoûtumez à commettre le crime sans honte, & sans crainte, soûtiennent ces sentimens. La créance dont ils semblent persuadez que Dieu, qui de sa Nature est immortel, a souffert violence, non de son propre amour, mais d'une puissance étrangere, est au de-là de toute sorte d'extravagance. Ils ne font pas réfléxion que la patience, ni la grandeur de courage, ne sont ni touchées des injures, ni ébranlées des outrages, & qu'elles rompent par leur propre fermeté les efforts des ennemis qui les attaquent. Dieu aiant dessein de rétablir la modestie, & la justice sur la terre, avoit assemblé des hommes sages pour publier par leur ministére une tres-salutaire doctrine, & pour faire en sorte que les hommes parvinssent à la béatitude, en imitant autant qu'ils en sont capables les soins de sa Providence. Quel plus grand avantage se peut-on jamais figurer que de recevoir de la bouche de Dieu même des loix qui tendent à nous inspirer la vertu, à nous rendre semblables à lui, & à nous procurer un bon-heur qui n'a point de fin. La reformation & la conversion de tous les

peuples, est la plus célébre de toutes les victoires, l'effet du pouvoir le plus absolu, l'ouvrage le plus digne des mains de Dieu. Nous reconnoissons, Divin Sauveur, que toute la gloire de cette victoire vous appartient. Mais toi, ô blasphéme! qui n'es appuié que sur les bruits vagues & confus du mensonge & de l'imposture, tu trompes les jeunes gens, tu persuades des hommes, qui dans un âge avancé, ont toute l'indiscrétion de la jeunesse, tu les détournes du service de Dieu, & les engage au culte des Idoles. Tu es cause qu'ils outragent par leurs calomnies le Sauveur qui est Dieu, & Fils de Dieu, & l'Auteur de tous les biens. N'est-il pas reconnu pour Dieu par les nations les plus modérées & les plus sages? N'use-t-il pas de sa clémence envers elles, bien qu'il pût leur faire sentir les effets de sa puissance? Allez donc, impies, car vous méritez au moins d'être traitez de la sorte, puisque vous ne recevez maintenant aucun autre châtiment de vos crimes: Allez, dis-je, égorger des victimes, & faire des fêtes & des festins pleins de débauche & d'intempérance. Vous couvrez vos déréglemens sous l'apparence de la piété. Vous faites semblant de sacrifier aux Dieux, & vous ne sacrifiez qu'à vos passions. Vous ne savez aucun bien, & vous ne savez pas même le premier commandement que Dieu a fait aux hommes, pour la conduite de leur vie, & l'ordre qu'il a donné à son Fils de les gouverner, de telle sorte qu'ils arrivent par la pratique de la vertu, à la possession d'un bon-heur éternel. Voila ce que j'avois à dire des desseins de Dieu touchant la conduite de l'homme. Je n'en ai rien avancé en l'air. Je n'en ai rien débité par conjecture comme font plusieurs.

Quelqu'un demandera peut-être, d'où vient ce nom de Fils, puisqu'il n'y a qu'un Dieu qui n'engendre point de la maniére ordinaire. Il y a deux ma-

maniéres d'engendrer. L'une qui est ordinaire & connuë de tout le monde, & l'autre est extraordinaire, & éternelle. Ceux que Dieu favorise de son amour, connoissent cette derniére maniére de produire. Il n'y a point de personnes intelligentes & éclairées qui ne sachent quel est le principe qui a disposé les parties de l'univers dans le bel ordre, où nous les voions. Il n'y a rien qui ne soit posterieur à son principe. Le monde est postérieur au sien. Le Verbe a produit le monde, & le conserve. Il étoit donc avant le monde. Il en est le principe, comme il a lui-même son Pere pour principe. La vérité de son existence éternelle, étant établie de la sorte sur un fondement inébranlable, on demandera sans doute, par quel motif il est décendu sur la terre, & est venu converser avec les hommes. Il est clair que l'amour qu'il a pour eux, a été son unique motif. Il n'y a point d'Ouvrier qui n'aime son ouvrage. Aiant donc à demeurer un peu de tems parmi les hommes, il est né parmi eux d'une maniére nouvelle. Il a été conçu sans Pere, enfanté par une Vierge. Il a pris naissance dans le tems, bien qu'il soit de toute éternité. Il s'est rendu sensible & palpable, bien qu'il soit spirituel & intelligible. Ce qui a suivi son Incarnation, n'a pas été moins merveilleux, ni moins surprenant. La colombe est sortie de l'arche de Noë, & est décenduë dans le sein de la Vierge. La sainteté de sa vie a répondu à celle de sa naissance. Il a fait paroître la sagesse de Dieu dés le berceau. Le Jourdain qui lavoit les taches des autres hommes, l'a reçu avec respect. En recevant l'onction Roiale, il a reçu la sience, le pouvoir de faire des miracles, & de guérir toute sorte de maladies. Il a exaucé ceux qui ont imploré son secours, & a donné des preuves continuelles d'une générosité bien-faisante. Il a laissé les préceptes non d'une basse prudence, mais d'une subli-

sublime sagesse. Il a enseigné non des vertus humaines & utiles seulement à la vie civile, mais le moien de parvenir à une vie incorruptible & immortelle, qui consiste dans la connoissance du Pere éternel. Qui pourroit faire le dénombrement des faveurs, qu'il a libéralement départies à ceux qui en avoient besoin; & parler de la vuë qu'il a renduë aux aveugles; de la vigueur qu'il a renduë aux paralitiques, & de la vie qu'il a renduë aux morts? Je ne dis rien des vivres qu'il a fournis à une incroiable multitude qui l'avoit suivi dans le desert. Verbe Divin! Sagesse éternelle du Pere, qui nous délivrez de nos maux, & qui nous révélez une doctrine capable de nous rendre heureux, je vous remercie de ces faveurs. Je n'entreprens pas de publier vos loüanges. Car qui est l'homme qui les puisse publier? J'ai dessein seulement de vous donner des marques de mon humble reconnoissance. Vous avez tiré les étres du sein du néant. Vous avez produit les astres, dont la lumiére nous éclaire. Vous avez dissipé la confusion où étoient les élémens au commencement du monde. Mais la preuve la plus éclatante & la plus solide que vous aiez donnée aux hommes de vôtre affection, c'est que vous leur avez inspiré un désir ardent de parvenir à la félicité souveraine, que vous les avez engagez dans un commerce où ils trouvent de grands avantages à communiquer aux autres ce qu'ils ont de sagesse & de vertu. Vous les avez délivrez de l'intempérance, & leur avez donné des sentimens de modération & de douceur. Vous leur avez mis la miséricorde devant les yeux, & l'assurance des promesses que la foi leur fait. Vous leur avez enseigné la modestie & la pudeur, & vous avez exterminé l'injustice qui régnoit auparavant sur la terre. Nul autre que vous ne l'auroit pû exterminer. Voila de quelle maniére la Providence éternelle étant décenduë sur la terre, en a reformé les

les abus, & corrigé les desordres. Comme elle savoit qu'il y auroit des hommes assez éclairez pour lever les yeux au Ciel, & d'autres assez stupides pour demeurer attachez à la terre; elle a opéré publiquement les miracles, & rendu l'usage des sens à ceux qui l'avoient perdu & la vie aux morts, afin que personne ne pût douter de la grandeur de sa puissance. Elle a commandé aux plus impérieux des élémens, & appaisé par sa parole les émotions de la mer. Aprés avoir accompli les miracles les plus surprenans, & avoir fait passer les hommes de l'instabilité de l'incrédulité, à l'immobilité de la foi, elle est remontée au ciel par l'effet d'un pouvoir qui ne peut étre que divin. Le tems de ses souffrances & de ses foiblesses n'a pas été exemt de miracles qui ont été des preuves sensibles de sa force & de sa majesté. Les ténébres ont enveloppé le Soleil. La fraieur a saisi les nations qui, surprises de voir retomber l'Univers dans la premiére confusion de son origine, étoient en peine de savoir par quel attentat le Seigneur de la nature avoit été outragé. Mais Dieu aiant méprisé avec sa générosité ordinaire, la malignité des impies, rétablit bien-tôt l'ordre du monde, & lui rendit sa beauté accoûtumée.

CHAPITRE XII.

De ceux qui n'ont point connu le Mystére de l'Incarnation: Des avantages de ceux qui l'ont connu, & qui l'ont confessé jusques à leur mort.

PEUT-ÉTRE que quelqu'un de ceux qui sont accoûtumez à avancer des blasphémes dira, qu'il étoit aisé à Dieu de changer le cœur des hommes, & de les rendre plus doux & plus équitables. Mais quel meilleur moien y avoit-il pour cela, que de

de converser avec eux ? Dieu ne les a-t-il pas honorez de sa presence, & ne leur a-t-il pas donné des préceptes salutaires ? Si les instructions qu'il leur a données de vive voix, ne leur ont de rien servi, de quoi leur auroit servi son absence & son silence ? Leur malice & leur dureté ont été les seuls obstacles que sa doctrine ait trouvez. Toutes-les-fois que nous-nous aigrissons contre les bons avis que l'on nous donne, nôtre esprit s'obscurcit, & s'aveugle. Les hommes que le Sauveur a enseignez, prenoient plaisir à rejetter sa doctrine, & à boucher leurs oreilles, de peur d'entendre sa Loi. S'ils l'avoient entenduë, ils en auroient reçu la récompense, non seulement dans cette vie, mais dans l'autre qui est la véritable. Cette récompense est l'immortalité, où ceux-là seuls peuvent prétendre qui connoissent Dieu, & qui réglent si bien leur conduite, qu'elle puisse servir de modéle aux autres. Les sages ne reçoivent la lumiére de la doctrine que pour la communiquer, & pour transmettre à leurs décendans, l'observation de la Loi de Dieu. De l'observation exacte de cette Loi, & de la pureté de la foi & de la dévotion, naît le mépris de la mort. Quiconque l'a une fois conçu, demeure ferme comme un rocher contre les tempêtes du siécle. Aprés qu'il a méprisé les ménaces, il reçoit la couronne de la main de celui dont il a soûtenu la cause. Il ne s'attribuë pas néanmoins la gloire de sa victoire, parce qu'il sait que la constance qu'il a fait paroître au milieu des tourmens, ne vient que de la grace de Dieu. La mort où l'on s'expose de cette sorte, est suivie de l'immortalité. Tel est le pris de la fidélité & de la valeur d'un Martyr. Voila pourquoi on chante des Hymnes & des Pseaumes. Voilà pourquoi on honore sa mémoire par un sacrifice de loüanges & d'actions de graces, que l'on offre à Dieu, sans répandre de sang, sans brûler d'encens, sans allumer

lumer de bucher, & sans chercher d'autre lumiére que celle qui est nécessaire pour éclairer ceux qui prient. Quelques-uns ont la charité de préparer en ces occasions des repas fort sobres, pour nourrir les pauvres, & pour soulager la misére de ceux qui ont été chassez de leur Païs, & dépoüillez de leurs biens. Que si quelqu'un juge que ces exercices de la charité sont incommodes, il n'est pas instruit sans doute de la doctrine de Dieu.

CHAPITRE XIII.

Qu'il a été nécessaire qu'il y eût de la différence entre les créatures. Que les hommes se portent au bien & au mal, par le mouvement de leur volonté. Que le jugement dernier est nécessaire.

Il se trouve des personnes qui ont l'insolence de reprendre la sagesse de Dieu, & de le blâmer de ce qu'au lieu de donner la même inclination à tous les étres, il leur en à donné de différentes, & souvent même de contraires; & c'est vrai-semblablement d'où procéde la varieté que l'on remarque entre les mœurs & les volontez des hommes. Il seroit sans doute à souhaitter qu'ils s'accordassent parfaitement en ce qui regarde la connoissance de Dieu, l'observation de ses commandemens, la fermeté en la foi : Mais il est ridicule de vouloir qu'ils soient semblables en toutes choses, & ne pas considérer la différence qu'il y a entre l'univers, & les parties qui le composent; entre la Physique & la Morale; entre les propriétez du corps & celles de l'ame. Elle est autant au dessus du monde sensible & des étres corporels, qu'elle est proche de la nature de Dieu. Cette bonté souveraine se communique aux hommes, mais elle

elle ne s'y communique pas indistinctement. Elle ne fait cette faveur signalée qu'à ceux qui desirent avec ardeur de la connoître, & qui la cherchent avec empressement.

CHAPITRE XIV.

Que l'homme étant éloigné de Dieu par sa nature s'en approche par la vertu.

C'est sans doute une folie de comparer ce qui a été engendré avec ce qui ne l'a point été. Ce qui a été engendré a commencé dans un tems, & finira dans un autre ; au lieu que ce qui n'a point été engendré, n'a jamais commencé, & ne finira jamais. Comment pourroit-on égaler ce qui a été fait, à celui par l'ordre duquel il a été fait ? Comment auroit-il ordonné le commencement & la production d'une chose qui seroit aussi ancienne que lui-même ? On ne sauroit même lui comparer les choses celestes, comme on ne sauroit comparer le monde sensible, au monde intelligible, & les copies, à l'original. Y a-t-il rien de si extravagant que cette confusion qui obscurcit l'éclat de la Majesté de Dieu, en le mêlant avec les hommes & les bêtes ? Ne faudroit-il pas avoir perdu l'esprit pour prétendre égaler la puissance divine ? Si nous desirons parvenir à la félicité que Dieu nous promet, nous devons garder les commandemens qu'il nous impose. C'est l'unique moien de nous mettre au dessus du tems, & de mériter l'éternité. La grandeur de l'homme consiste dans sa soûmission au pouvoir de Dieu, dans la méditation de ses commandemens, dans l'habitude de se détacher de la terre, & de s'élever au Ciel. Il triomphe par ce moien de tout ce qui lui est contraire. Voila le fondement solide de la différence

férence qui se remarque entre les étres, soit pour la dignité, ou pour le pouvoir. Les personnes d'esprit la reconnoissent, & s'y soûmettent avec joie, & ceux qui refusent de s'y soûmettre, n'évitent pas le châtiment qui est dû à leur orgueil.

CHAPITRE XV.

Des commandemens que le Sauveur à faits, & des miracles qu'il a opérez.

LE Fils de Dieu exhorte tous les hommes à la pratique de la vertu. Ce n'est qu'à dessein de les rendre heureux, qu'il est décendu sur la terre, & qu'aiant choisi des hommes d'une tres-grande probité, il leur a enseigné une doctrine tres-salutaire, & qui pouvoit servir de reméde contre la jalousie, par laquelle le Démon a accoûtumé de surprendre les ames foibles & indiscrétes. Ce divin Sauveur a visité & guéri les malades, consolé les affligez, assisté les pauvres. Il a loüé la modération, & la retenuë. Il a recommandé la patience dans les disgraces & le mêpris des injures. Il a assuré que c'est remporter une victoire que de souffrir généreusement les plus facheux accidens. Il a appris que la véritable force d'esprit consiste dans la connoissance de la vérité, & dans l'exercice de la charité par laquelle on emploie au soûlagement des misérables, le bien que l'on a aquis par des moiens légitimes. Il a condamné le desir de la domination, & déclaré que comme il a pris la protection des petis & des foibles, il abandonnera ceux qui les auront mêprisez. Aprés avoir éprouvé par ces préceptes la fidélité de ses Disciples, il leur a enseigné non seulement à s'élever au dessus des ménaces des supplices, & de tout ce qu'ils ont de plus terrible, & à mettre en lui leur espéran-

espérance. Il fit un jour une sevére réprimande à un d'entre eux qui s'étoit emporté de colére, & qui avoit tiré l'épée pour la défense de son Maître. Ce Divin Sauveur lui commanda de remettre son épée dans le fourreau, & prononça cette loi, que quiconque se serviroit de l'épée, soit en attaquant, ou en se défendant, mourroit de mort violente. C'est sans doute une sagesse toute celeste d'aimer mieux souffrir l'injustice que de la faire, & de recevoir plûtôt une perte, que de la causer à un autre. L'injustice étant un grand péché, celui qui la commet est sujet à un terrible châtiment, dont celui qui l'a soufferte est exemt. Il dépend de celui qui est parfaitement soûmis à Dieu de ne commettre jamais d'injustice, & de n'en jamais recevoir, parce que Dieu, auquel il a mis sa confiance, ne manque point de le protéger. Il n'a garde de se défendre contre celui qui l'attaque, ni de s'engager à un combat dont l'évenement seroit douteux; un homme sage ne préféra jamais ce qui est douteux, à ce qui est assuré. Il a reçu des marques trop visibles de la protection de Dieu, & a été délivré trop-de-fois par sa main du milieu des périls, pour douter de sa puissance. Il a marché sur la mer, dont le Sauveur avoit affermi les flots par sa parole. La connoissance que nous avons aquise de ces miracles par le témoignage de nos propres yeux est le fondement de nôtre foi, & de nôtre confiance; de sorte que quand nous sommes ménacez de quelque danger, nous ne nous repentons point d'avoir ajoûté créance à la parole de Dieu, & ne perdons rien de l'espérance que nous avons mise en sa protection. Quiconque est dans cette disposition a, Dieu au milieu de son cœur. Il ne peut être vaincu. Car comment le pourroit-il être aiant Dieu, qui est invincible, au milieu de soi? Nous sommes confirmez dans cette assurance par l'exemple du Sauveur, qui étant tombé entre les mains

de

de ses ennemis a triomphé de leur injustice, & malgré leur cruauté a accompli les desseins de sa Providence, & de son amour.

CHAPITRE XVI.

Que l'avénement du Sauveur a été prédit par les Prophétes, & qu'il a été ordonné pour la ruine des Idoles.

SA passion & sa mort avoient été prédites par les Prophétes, aussi bien que sa naissance. Le tems où il devoit naître avoit été marqué, & où les semences de l'intempérance, & de l'iniquité qui étoufent les bonnes mœurs seroient arrachées, où tout le monde seroit éclairé, où la Loi de Dieu seroit publiée, où son culte seroit établi, & la superstition abolie. Cette impiété avoit répandu le sang non seulement des animaux, mais aussi des hommes. Les Assyriens & les Egyptiens avoient fait des loix cruelles par lesquelles il étoit ordonné d'immoler des personnes innocentes à des statuës de cuivre, & de terre. Ils en ont reçu le châtiment qu'ils méritoient. Memphis & Babylone, dit le Prophéte, seront détruites, & seront laissées desertes avec leurs Dieux. Je parle de l'accomplissement de cette Prophétie, non pour en avoir entendu parler, mais pour en avoir été témoin. Memphis est maintenant abandonnée, cette ville autrefois si superbe où demeuroit Pharaon, dont Moïse abbaissa l'orgueil par le commandement de Dieu, & dont il ruina l'armée non par la force des armes, mais par l'ardeur de ses priéres, bien que ce fût une armée victorieuse, & qu'elle ne manquât d'aucunes provisions de guerre, ou de bouche.

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CHAPITRE XVII.

De la sagesse de Moïse. De Daniel, & de trois jeunes hommes de Babylone.

Il n'y auroit jamais eu de si heureux peuple que celui des Juifs, s'ils ne s'étoient point éloignez de Dieu. Qui pourroit relever Moïse par des loüanges aussi magnifiques que celles qu'il mérite? Il rendit ses compatriotes capables d'obéïssance, & de discipline. Il dissipa leur tristesse en brisant leurs chaînes, & leur donna de la joie en leur rendant la liberté. Il apporta un changement si considérable à l'état de leurs affaires, que pour avoir joüi d'une trop grande prospérité, ils en devinrent insolens. Il surpassa si fort en sagesse tous ceux qui l'avoient précédé, que les plus célébres Philosophes, qu'il y eût parmi les Paiens, tinrent à honneur de se dire ses Disciples. Pythagore le reconnut pour son maître, & fit de si notables progrés dans son école, qu'il mérita d'avoir pour imitateur de sa tempérance, Platon le plus modéré des Philosophes.

Quel fut l'éclat de la victoire remportée sur le tiran de Syrie par Daniel, qui avoit joint la grandeur du courage, & la pureté des mœurs à la connoissance de l'avenir? Nabucodonosor étoit le nom de ce tiran. Le débri de sa puissance fut recueilli par les Perses. La réputation de ses richesses étoit si grande qu'elle dure encore aujourd'hui. On ne parloit que de l'excez prodigieux de sa superstition; des édifices qu'il élevoit à une hauteur démésurée, & de l'assemblage des métaux qu'il destinoit à faire les statuës de ses Dieux, des loix cruelles & épouvantables par lesquelles il autorisoit l'idolatrie. Comme la piété sincére que Daniel

niel avoit envers Dieu, ne lui donnoit que du mépris pour la magnificence de cét appareil, il prédit qu'elle attireroit quelque mal-heur extraordinaire. Les richesses immenses renversent de telle sorte l'esprit qu'elles le rendent incapable de bien juger. Voila pourquoi le Tiran bien loin de déferer aux avis de Daniel, laissa éclater sa cruauté naturelle en le condamnant à étre exposé aux bêtes. La générosité que les trois freres de Babylone eurent de confesser publiquement qu'ils adoroient le vrai Dieu est tout-à-fait merveilleuse. Elle à servi depuis de modéle à ceux qui ont signalé leur fidélité en soûtenant le nom du Sauveur. Le feu, ni les bêtes ne pûrent nuire à ces trois jeunes hommes. Leur pureté éloigna d'eux les brasiers, & les flâmes. Aprés que la justice de Dieu eut détruit par ses foudres l'Empire des Assyriens, sa Providence conduisit Daniel à la Cour de Cambyse Roi de Perse. Il y fut suivi de la jalousie, environné de piéges dressez par les Mages, & d'une suite de périls d'où la Providence le délivra avec tant d'avantage, qu'ils ne servirent qu'à éprouver sa vertu, & à en relever l'éclat Les Mages rendirent les actions les plus merveilleuses de Daniel suspectes au Roi par leurs calomnies, & lui firent accroire que les priéres que ce Prophéte faisoit trois-fois le jour pouvoient avoir des effets tres-dangereux. Ils lui persuadérent de la sorte d'exposer aux lions un homme qui non seulement n'avoit fait aucun mal, mais qui avoit procuré de grands avantages à la Nation des Perses. Il fut décendu dans la fosse de ces bêtes farouches, non pour en étre dévoré, mais pour en étre tiré sain & entier, & avec une réputation plus glorieuse que jamais. Il trouva plus de douceur parmi les lions, que parmi ceux qui l'avoient condamné. Il changea leur rage par la force des priéres qu'il fit à Dieu. Cambyse aiant appris ce miracle extraordi-
 naire

naire de la Puissance Divine en fut surpris d'étonnement, & conçut en même tems un sérieux repentir de l'injustice qu'il avoit commise. Il voulut être témoin du triomphe de Daniel, & aprés l'avoir vû qui prioit Dieu & les lions à ses piez, il commanda que l'on mît en sa place les Mages qui lui avoient persuadé de le condamner. On ne les eut pas si-tôt exposez aux lions, qu'ils furent déchirez en piéces.

CHAPITRE XVIII.

Prédiction de la Passion, faite par la Sibylle Erytrée.

Je croi devoir rapporter ici un témoignage que les étrangers ont rendu à l'avantage du Sauveur, afin que ceux qui l'attaquent par leurs blasphémes aient quelque confusion de leur insolence, & qu'ils apprennent de ceux mêmes de leur parti, à reconnoître sa Divinité. La Sibylle Erytrée, qui selon son propre témoignage vivoit au sixiéme siécle depuis le déluge, fut Prêtresse d'Apollon & porta comme lui une couronne d'or, garda le trépié autour duquel un serpent étoit enlassé, répondit à ceux qui la consultoient. Elle avoit été consacrée par l'indiscrétion de ses parens à ce ministére où l'on ne peut apprendre que de l'insolence, & de la fureur; comme l'exemple de Daphné le prouve fort bien. Cette Sibylle s'étant donc un jour retirée dans le lieu le plus secret où elle faisoit ses cérémonies, elle fut remplie de l'esprit Divin & prédit l'avénement du Sauveur en vers, dont les lettres initiales font ces mots. Jesus Christ, Fils de Dieu, Sauveur, croix. Voici les vers.


Juges

Jugez du Roi des Rois du grand avénement
Et de tous les mortels du dernier jugement.
Si la terre paroît de sueur détrempée
Vous saurez qu'en ce tems du Créateur l'épée,
Sera comme sa chair par les yeux des Paiens
Clairement aperçuë, ainsi que des Chrétiens.
Heureux celui pour lors qui méprisant la terre
Rejettera l'argent, & l'or, comme le verre.
Incontinent aprés, du centre des enfers
Sortiront les captifs déchargez de leurs fers.
Tous tant bons que méchans passeront par la flâme.
Flâme, dont les ardeurs éprouveront leur ame.
Ils diront hautement les secrets de leurs cœurs,
Leurs crimes les plus noirs, leurs brutales fureurs.
Saisis d'une douleur à nulle autre semblable,
Déploreront leurs maux d'un accent lamentable.
En vain chercheront-ils des Astres le secours,
Des Astres ils ne verront ni les feux ni le cours.
Ils verront s'enfoncer les plus hautes montagnes,
Et les vallons hausser à l'égal des campagnes.
Vaisseaux dessus les mers nul ne verra flotter.
Sources de claires eaux nul ne verra couler.
Astres du Firmament vous brûlerez la terre.
Voix tonnante du ciel, annoncez-lui la guerre.
Vaste & sombre Chaos, réjettez l'univers,
En son premier état d'un mélange divers.
Venez, fiers Empereurs, avec le Diadéme,
Reconnoître de Dieu la Puissance supréme.
Courbez-vous devant lui, & que chaque mortel
Révére le signal, qui le rend immortel.
Orguëil, vous y trouvez un tourment qui vous blesse.
Iustes, vous tirerez l'honneur de sa bassesse.
Sauveur, de vôtre camp il sera l'étendart.

Il est probable que cette Vierge a été inspirée de Dieu, quand elle a fait cette prédiction. Ce lui a été sans doute un grand avantage, d'avoir été choisie de lui, pour expliquer ses desseins, & pour annoncer les ordres de sa Providence.

CHAPITRE XIX.

Que cette prédiction n'a point été supposée par les Chrétiens. Que Cicéron & Virgile ont parlé de cette Sibylle.

Il y a plusieurs personnes qui doutent de la vérité de cette prédiction, bien qu'elles demeurent d'accord que la Sibylle Erytrée avoit connoissance de l'avenir. Ces vers qui contiennent des préceptes fort utiles pour la conduite des mœurs, qui portent à la modestie, & à la tempérance, & qui détournent des plaisirs, leurs paroissent fort suspects, & ils s'imaginent qu'ils ont été faits par quelqu'un de nôtre Religion, qui s'étoit exercé à la Poësie, & que depuis ils ont été faussement attribuez à la Sibylle. Mais la vérité est si évidente qu'il n'est pas possible de l'obscurcir. On a fait une supputation si exacte des années, qu'il ne reste aucun fondement de soupçonner que ce Poëme-là ait été composé depuis l'avénement & la condamnation du Sauveur. Tout le monde demeure d'accord que Cicéron l'a lû, l'a traduit en Latin, & l'a inséré dans ses ouvrages. Il fut tué par l'ordre d'Antoine, qui fut vaincu par Auguste. Ce Prince gouverna l'Empire pendant cinquante-six ans, & eut Tibére pour successeur, sous le régne duquel le Sauveur parut, la Religion fut révélée, & un peuple nouveau fut établi. Il me semble que le Prince des Poëtes Latins a parlé de ce peuple quand il a dit :

Du haut du Ciel décend une nouvelle race,
Dont sur terre jamais on n'avoit vû de trace.

Il dit encore dans la même Eclogue.

Elevons nôtre voix, Muse de Trinacrie,
La grandeur du sujet mérite qu'on s'écrie.

Que

Que peut-on desirer de plus clair ? Il ajoûte :

Le dernier âge enfin décrit par la Sibylle,
Qui dans Cumes chantoit plus haut que nôtre Idyle,
Commence à s'écouler.

Il parle de la Sibylle de Cumes & de ses prédictions. Mais non content de les avoir marquées, il va plus avant, & rend lui-même par les vers qui suivent, un témoignage plus manifeste en faveur de la vérité. Voici les vers.

Les astres par leur cours
Forment un nouveau siécle, & font de nouveaux jours.
La Vierge est de retour, & Saturne redonne
Les biens du premier tems, où il prît la couronne.

Qui est cette Vierge qui revient, si ce n'est celle qui a conçu du saint Esprit ? Qui pourroit empêcher que celle qui a conçu du saint Esprit, ne demeure Vierge ? Le Roi attendu avec des souhaits si ardens, revient avec elle pour délivrer le monde des maux soûs lesquels il gémissoit. Je croi devoir ajoûter ce que le Poëte dit de sa naissance.

O toi chaste Déesse, assiste à la naissance
De ce charmant enfant, dont la haute puissance
Va changer l'univers, & faire un peuple d'or
D'un peuple, qui n'avoit que le fer pour tresor.
Soûs lui du crime afreux l'injuste tirannie
Sera par la vertu, loin de tous lieux bannie.

Nous voions que la vérité n'est exprimée qu'obscurément dans ces vers, & soûs le voile de l'allégorie. Ceux qui en pénétrent le sens, y découvrent la divinité de Jesus Christ. Le Poëte a caché ses sentimens, de peur d'être accusé d'avoir violé les loix du païs, & d'avoir ruiné la Religion autorisée par l'antiquité. Je ne doute point qu'il n'eût connoissance du mystére de la rédemption & du salut. Mais pour éviter les mauvais traitemens, il a donné à ses lecteurs une idée, à laquelle ils étoient accoûtumez, en disant que les peuples

éleveroient des temples & des autels, & offriroient des sacrifices au nouveau né.

CHAPITRE XX.

De quelques autres vers de Virgile, par lesquels il a marqué obscurément nos mystéres.

Ce que Virgile a ajoûté, est comme une suite naturelle de ce qu'il avoit avancé auparavant.

Il sera revêtu de la divinité.
Des Héros il verra l'auguste majesté.
Il sera vû lui-même en Monarque suprême,
Le front étincelant d'un pompeux diadême.
Le monde sous ses loix joüira de la paix
De son pere & de lui, respectant les hauts faits.
La terre portera sans être cultivée,
Le lierre & la féve, à l'acanthe mêlée.

Cét excellent homme qui avoit une connoissance tres-exacte de toute sorte de siences, a ajoûté ce qui suit par rapport au gouvernement, sous lequel il vivoit.

Nos chévres brouteront dans les fertiles plaines,
Et puis de lait chez nous retourneront trop pleines.
Des loups la cruauté, des lions la fureur,
Aux timides troupeaux ne feront plus de peur.

Il n'y a rien de si vrai. Car la foi des Chrétiens ne devoit point appréhender les violences des Empereurs.

Les fleurs s'éléveront pour parer ton berceau.
Les poisons, les serpens y verront leur tombeau.
L'amôme précieux que vante l'Assyrie
Sera commun par tout, en dépit de l'envie.

On ne sauroit rien dire de plus vrai, ni de plus convenable à la puissance du Sauveur. L'Esprit saint a offert à un peuple nouveau le berceau d'un Dieu

Dieu naiſſant, comme un bouquet de fleurs de bonne odeur. Le ſerpent a été tué, & ſon poiſon eſt demeuré inutile. Ce ſerpent eſt celui qui trompa nos premiers parens, & qui leur conſeilla de renoncer à l'auſtérité de la tempérance, pour goûter la douceur du plaiſir. Ce fut lui qui avant l'avénement du Sauveur, priva les hommes de la connoiſſance de leur devoir & de l'eſpérance de leur bon-heur. Lorſque le corps, dont le Sauveur s'étoit revêtu, eut été ſéparé de ſon ame pour un peu de tems, la puiſſance de la reſurrection fut révélée aux hommes, & leurs taches furent effacées par l'eau du bâtéme. Le Sauveur releva alors le courage des diſciples, par l'aſſurance qu'il leur donna de leur reſurrection, à l'exemple de la ſienne. On vit au même moment ceſſer la malignité des poiſons, & mourir la mort, la Nation des Aſſyriens, par leſquels la créance de la Divinité avoit été conſervée parmi les hommes, & tranſmiſe à la poſtérité, finit au même tems. Virgile entend par l'amôme une multitude incroiable de Chrétiens, qui étant arroſez d'une eau celeſte, s'élévent d'une tige comme des branches chargées de fleurs. Ce qui ſuit s'accorde fort bien avec ce qui précéde.

Des illuſtres Héros tu liras les merveilles,
Et de ton pere auſſi les vertus ſans pareilles.

Par les merveilles des Héros, Virgile entend les œuvres des juſtes. Par les vertus du Pere, il entend la création du monde, & la durée de ce monde. Il entend peut-étre auſſi les loix, par leſquelles l'Egliſe donne des préceptes ſi ſalutaires de juſtice, & de tempérance. Le progrez de la vertu eſt auſſi fort merveilleux, lorſque des perſonnes qui n'étoient pas fort avancées, ni dans ſa connoiſſance, ni dans ſa pratique, arrivent tout d'un coup à la perfection.

On verra peu à peu nos moiſſons ſe jaunir.

C'est-à-dire que les fruits de la Loi de Dieu croîtront pour le bien des hommes.

Et sur des seps incultes nos raisins se meurir.

On n'avoit point vû de ces raisins-là, au tems de la corruption du genre humain.

Le miel du chêne dur découlera sans ruche.

Par la dureté du chêne, il entend l'insensibilité des hommes de ce tems-là. Il désigne peut-être aussi la douceur que goûteront ceux qui, pour l'amour de Dieu, auront souffert de grands travaux avec patience.

Il restera pourtant parmi tant de bon-heur.
De légers rejettons de l'antique fureur.
Le desir de gagner bravera les orages.
L'ambition, de murs fermera des villages.
L'avare laboureur déchirera les champs,
Pour tirer de leur sein la moisson tous les ans.
Tiphys & ses Héros sur la liquide plaine,
Jetteront la terreur d'une guerre prochaine.
Contre la grande Troye Achile de nouveau
Partira, pour en faire un funeste tombeau.

Cela est fort-bien, tres-sage Poëte, vous avez porté la licence de la Poësie, jusques où la bienséance permettoit de la porter. Vous n'aviez pas entrepris de prédire l'avenir, comme un Prophéte. Vous avez appréhendé le péril, dont ceux qui auroient voulu ébranler les loix établies par les anciens, étoient ménacez. Vous avez proposé d'une maniére seure pour vous, la vérité à ceux qui étoient assez éclairez pour la voir. Quand vous avez décrit le Sauveur, allant à la guerre de Troie; soûs le nom de Troie, vous avez entendu l'univers. Il a fait la guerre aux démons, quand il est venu dans le monde, tant par le commandement de son Pere, que par l'ordre de sa Providence. Voions ce que Virgile dit ensuite.

Lorsque le cours des ans vous aura mis dans l'âge,
Où ainsi que le corps s'augmente le courage.

C'est-

C'est-à-dire, lorsque vous serez arrivé à un âge parfait, que vous aurez ôté les desordres, & établi la paix dans le monde.

Le Pilote on verra quitter le gouvernail.
Des bœufs le laboureur jetter tout l'attirail.
Tout terroir portera, sans que l'on le cultive,
Poires, pommes, raisins, orge, froment, olive,
Des couleurs la toison n'empruntera plus l'art.
Avéque les couleurs elle croîtra sans fart.
Noble race de Dieu, de Jupiter chérie,
Joüissez des honneurs que nul ne vous envie.
Regardez l'univers qui, sous son propre poids,
Se balance soi-même, & respecte ses loix.
Voiez les vastes mers, les cieux & les nuages,
Et du siécle avenir les brillantes images.
Que si l'ordre des tems secondant mes souhaits,
M'accorde quelques ans pour chanter vos hauts-faits,
Mon art vous dressera un superbe trophée,
Sans redouter de Lin le savoir, ni d'Orphée.
Il saura surpâsser leurs tons harmonieux,
Bien qu'ils soient soûtenus par leurs doctes aieux.
Pan même, condamné par toute l'Arcadie,
Dira, qu'à mes chansons céde sa mélodie.

CHAPITRE XXI.

Que ces vers ne peuvent être entendus d'un homme ordinaire. De l'ignorance des Paiens.

PEUT-ETRE que les personnes peu éclairées, jugeront que ces vers doivent être entendus de la naissance d'un homme ordinaire. Mais quelle apparence y a-t-il de dire, que la naissance d'un homme ordinaire changera si fort la face des choses que la terre n'aura plus besoin d'être labourée, ni de recevoir de semence, & que la vigne ne demandera plus de façons? La nature est soû-

mise à la volonté de Dieu. Mais elle ne dépend point du caprice des hommes. D'ailleurs les élémens ne feroient pas paroître une si grande joie pour la naissance d'un homme. Ils ne la font paroître que pour celle d'un Dieu. Ce que le Poëte souhaite la prolongation de sa vie, est une marque qu'il parle d'un Dieu. Car ce n'est que de Dieu que l'on attend la vie & le salut. Voici de quelle maniére la Sibylle lui parle. Pourquoi, Seigneur, m'imposez-vous la nécessité de prédire l'avenir, que ne me retirez-vous de la terre, & que ne me réservez-vous pour le jour de vôtre heureux avénement ? Pour ce qui est de Virgile, voici ce qu'il dit, aprés ce que nous avons déja cité de lui.

Commencez, jeune enfant, par vos aimables cris,
A flater vôtre mere ; & par vos doux souris.
Pendant deux fois cinq mois son cœur plein de tendresse
Eut pour vous les dégouts que donne la grossesse.
Commencez, jeune enfant, dés vos plus tendres ans,
A flater vos parens par vos regars charmans.
Quiconque n'aura pas dissipé leurs tristesses,
Ni par ses petis jeux attiré leurs carresses,
Il sera rejetté comme peu gracieux,
Du lit de la Déesse & du festin des Dieux.

Comment est-ce que ces parens auroient ri pour le caresser, puisque Dieu son Pere est exemt de qualitez ? N'aiant point de corps, il n'a point de figure, & ne laisse pas d'étre dans tous les corps. Il n'y a personne qui ne sache que l'Esprit Divin n'est point engagé dans le mariage. Le souverain bien est l'objet de tous les desirs. Mais il n'en peut concevoir aucun pour les biens qui sont au dessous de lui. La sagesse éternelle ne peut rien avoir de commun avec le plaisir. Des idées aussi basses que celles-là ne peuvent entrer que dans l'esprit de ceux qui se representent la Conception & la Naissance de Jesus Christ comme une conception

ption purement humaine, & qui n'ont pas soin de s'abstenir de former une pensée, ou d'avancer une parole si impie. J'implore vôtre secours pour ce qui me reste à dire, ô piété, qui étes une loi sainte, le plus aimable de tous les biens, la maitresse de la vertu, le gage de l'immortalité. Je vous serai éternellement redevable de la bonté que vous avez euë de me guérir; la multitude qui ne reçoit point de vos remédes s'éloigne de vous, & passe de cét éloignement jusques à l'aversion de Dieu même, sans faire réfléxion qu'ils n'ont été mis au monde que pour le servir; & que le monde & tout ce que le monde renferme, est son ouvrage.

CHAPITRE XXII.

Actions de graces renduës à Dieu par Constantin. Détestation de la cruauté de Maximin.

Je tiens de la piété tout mon bon-heur, & toute la prospérité de mes affaires. L'accomplissement de mes souhaits, l'heureux succés de mes entreprises, la défaite de mes ennemis en sont des monumens publics. Rome le sait, & en témoigne sa joie, bien qu'elle se soit trompée en choisissant un Empereur indigne d'elle, & qui a reçu le châtiment dû à ses crimes. L'honneur que j'ai de vous parler, & le soin que je prens de ne vous parler qu'en des termes qui aient l'honnêteté & la pureté que vous desirez, m'empêchent de traiter un sujet si odieux. Je tâcherai néanmoins d'en toucher légérement une partie sans blesser la bienséance. Les Tirans vous avoient déclaré une guerre tres-cruelle, & avoient excité contre vos saintes assemblées une persécution tres-violente. Il y avoit dans Rome des personnes qui faisoient leur divertissement d'un si funeste mal-heur. Le champ étoit préparé

pour le combat. Vous y entrâtes appuiée sur la confiance que vous aviez mise en Dieu. La cruauté & l'impiété qui consumoient comme un embrasement tout ce qui paroissoit devant-elles, ne servirent qu'à relever l'éclat de vôtre gloire. Vôtre fermeté donna de l'étonnement, & du respect à tous ceux qui en furent témoins. On vit les bourreaux las de tourmenter, les liens lâchez, les feux éteints, le fer émoussé, & les saints inébranlables dans leur resolution, & dans leur foi. Quel fruit, ô le plus impie de tous les hommes, avez-vous tiré de l'injustice, & de la violence de vos entreprises? Qui vous avoit inspiré une si étrange fureur. Vous direz peut-étre que vous vouliez défendre l'honneur des Dieux. De quels Dieux, & quelle idée avez-vous de ces Dieux-là? Avez-vous crû qu'ils étoient aussi sujets à la colére que vous? S'ils y étoient sujets, il faloit plûtôt le trouver étrange, que de déférer à leurs ordres, & de faire mourir des innocens. Vous exculerez sans doute cette conduite par la nécessité où vous-vous étes trouvez de maintenir un usage introduit par vos ancêtres, & autorisé par la créance du peuple. Je reçoi vôtre excuse. Cét usage-là est conforme à la conduite que vous avez tenuë, & procéde de la même ignorance. Vous-vous étes peut-étre persuadé que des statuës faites par des sculpteurs, ont quelque puissance fort extraordinaire. C'est pour cela que vous leur avez rendu de profons respects, & que vous avez pris un soin fort particulier d'empêcher qu'elles ne fussent gâtées par la poussiére, & par la roüille. Les Dieux ont besoin de cette vigilance des hommes.

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CHAPITRE XXIII.

Des régles que les Chrétiens suivent. De l'amour que Dieu a pour eux. Du jugement, & des récompenses.

COMPAREZ, je vous prie, nôtre Religion avec la vôtre. On voit parmi nous une parfaite union, & une tendre charité. Nous reprenons les fautes d'une maniére qui corrige ceux qui les avoient commises, & qui ne les perdent pas. Nous avons une fidélité sincére, & inviolable envers Dieu, & envers les hommes. Nous avons une charité bienfaisante qui soulage ceux qui sont dans la misére. Nous avons une simplicité éloignée de déguisement, & une connoissance du Dieu véritable. Voila quelle est nôtre piété, & nôtre Religion. Voila le chemin par-où nous prétendons arriver à la vie éternelle. Quiconque garde cette maniére de vivre ne meurt point. Il s'aquite seulement du devoir que Dieu lui a imposé. Quand il fait profession de sa Religion il ne céde ni aux ménaces, ni aux outrages des persécuteurs. Il souffre constamment les plus rudes traitemens, & obtient les graces de Dieu par sa patience. Il ne faut pas douter que Dieu ne chérisse ceux qui ont de la vertu. Ce seroit une chose étrange que les grands eussent de la bonté pour ceux qui leur rendent des respects, & que les petis eussent de la réconnoissance pour ceux qui leur font du bien, & que Dieu qui exerce un pouvoir absolu sur toutes les créatures, & qui est leur souverain bien négligeât de leur distribuer des récompenses. Il nous est toûjours present, & nous assiste toutes-les-fois que nous faisons de bonnes

actions. Il récompense dés cette vie nôtre obéïssance, bien qu'il se reserve à la récompenser plus amplement par une vie éternelle. Il examinera toutes nos actions à son jugement. Il couronnera la vertu, & punira le vice.

CHAPITRE XXIV.

Fin malheureuse des Persécuteurs de l'Eglise.

Je vous demande, Déce, qui étiez autrefois animé d'une haine si envenimée contre l'Eglise, qui persécutiez les gens de bien avec une fureur si implacable, & qui leur insultiez avec tant d'insolence & de cruauté quand vous les voÿiez au milieu des plus terribles dangers, & des plus cuisantes douleurs, je vous demande dis-je en quel état vous-vous trouvez, & quelle est vôtre misére? Le tems qui précéda vôtre mort, qui vous vit défait avec vôtre armée dans les plaines de Scythie, & qui vit cét Empire autrefois si célébre exposé aux railleries & aux outrages des Goths, est un témoin irréprochable de la grandeur de vos disgraces. Vous, Valérien, qui avez exercé la même cruauté contre les serviteurs de Dieu, vous avez servi d'un exemple épouvantable de sa Justice, lorsque vous avez été pris par les Perses, chargé de chaînes, mené en triomphe avec vôtre robe de pourpre, & les autres marques de vôtre dignité, & enfin écorché & embaumé pour conserver la mémoire de vôtre disgrace. Vous, ô Aurélien, qui étiez coûpable des crimes les plus énormes n'avez-vous pas reçu un châtiment exemplaire, lorsque vous avez été tué en Thrace, & que vous avez trempé la terre de vôtre sang?

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CHAPITRE XXV.

De la maniére dont Dioclétien se démit de l'Empire. Du genre de sa mort.

DIOCLETIEN aprés avoir répandu le sang innocent des Fidéles, se condamna soi-même à une déposition honteuse à cause de la foiblesse de son esprit, & s'enferma dans l'obscurité d'une maison privée. Quel fruit tira-t-il de la guerre qu'il avoit déclarée à Dieu, si ce n'est la fraieur continuelle dont il fut agité le reste de sa vie, & l'appréhension qu'il eut toûjours d'étre frappé de la foudre? Nicomédie en est témoin. Ceux qui l'ont vû ne s'en peuvent taire, & je suis du nombre de ceux qui l'ont vû. Le Palais de Dioclétien fut brûlé par le feu du Ciel, & son cabinet ne fut pas épargné. Ce châtiment si extraordinaire, & si surprenant, avoit été prédit par des personnes fort intelligentes, & fort éclairées; qui ne pouvant tenir leur douleur secréte, la laissoient éclater par leurs soûpirs, qu'ils jettoient du fond de leur cœur, & par les plaintes qu'ils faisoient publiquement en ces termes. Quelle insolence, & quelle fureur de prendre les armes contre Dieu, de persécuter la piété, de répandre le sang des personnes que l'on ne peut accuser d'aucun crime? C'est un bel exemple de modération que le Prince donne à ses sujets. Ce sont des ordres fort sages qu'il donne à ses soldats d'avoir soin des personnes, & des biens de leurs citoiens. Des hommes qui n'avoient jamais vû d'ennemis enfonçoient leurs armes dans le corps des Romains. Mais enfin la Providence châtia leur cruauté, bien qu'elle ne la châtiât pas sans que l'Empire en souffrît du préjudice. On fit un si prodigieux massa-

cre

cre des nôtres, que si l'on en avoit fait un aussi grand des étrangers, on auroit assuré la paix pour plusieurs années. L'armée étant tombée sous la puissance d'un lâche qui avoit usurpé l'Empire par force, elle fut ruinée en plusieurs rencontres par la permission de Dieu, qui souhaitoit de rendre aux Romains leur premiére liberté. Les priéres qu'ils firent pour implorer le secours de Dieu au tems de leur oppression, & les actions de graces qu'ils lui rendirent après leur délivrance, sont des preuves convaiquantes de la bonté qu'il eut de les assister.

CHAPITRE XXVI.

Que Dieu est le principe de la piété, que nous lui devons attribuer le bien que nous faisons, & nous imputer le mal.

QUAND on louë les belles actions que je n'ai faites que par le mouvement de l'esprit de Dieu, ne lui en attribuë-t-on pas la gloire, comme au principal auteur. Cela est sans doute. Dieu est le véritable principe de tout bien, & les hommes ne sont que comme les instrumens dont il se sert pour l'exécution de ses desseins. Le plus excellent ministére qu'on lui puisse rendre, est d'user de cette sage précaution de ne commencer aucune entreprise, sans avoir fait auparavant les préparatifs qui en peuvent rendre l'exécution comme assurée. Chacun sait que je dois à Dieu le ministére de mes mains, & l'hommage de ma foi, & de mes priéres; & que mes entreprises ont été si heureuses que tout le monde en a reçu de plus notables avantages qu'il n'auroit osé souhaiter. On a vû les guerres que la Divine Providence a terminées par la défaite de nos ennemis. Toute priére sainte est invincible. Quiconque demande comme

me il faut, obtient infailliblement ce qu'il desire. Il n'y a que l'infirmité de la foi qui attire le refus. Dieu est toûjours propice, & favorable à la piété. Les hommes sont sujets à commettre des fautes. Mais Dieu n'est point cause de ces fautes-là. Ceux qui ont de la piété doivent rendre à Dieu de continuelles actions de graces pour la bonté qu'il a de nous conserver, & de rendre l'Empire florissant. Ils doivent aussi lui demander avec d'ardentes priéres, la continuation de ses faveurs, comme au Protecteur tout-puissant des justes, au Juge Souverain, au distributeur incorruptible des couronnes, & des récompenses.





HARANGUE A LA LOUANGE DE DE L'EMPEREUR CONSTANTIN,

Prononcée en la trentiéme année de son régne par Eusébe Evêque de Césarée.

Exor. Je ne parois pas ici pour y débiter des fables, ni des discours ingénieusement composez à dessein de charmer, comme par le chant des Sirénes, ceux qui me feront l'honneur de m'écouter. Je n'y presente point non plus des fleurs dans des vases d'or, & je n'y apporte point les ornemens de l'éloquence pour plaire à ceux qui les recherchent par une vaine curiosité. J'aime mieux suivre l'avis des Sages, & exhorter tout le monde à s'éloigner des grands chemins, & à éviter la foule du peuple. Je viens faire par une nouvelle méthode le Panégyrique de l'Empereur. Quelque presse qu'il y ait autour de moi, je tiendrai une route qui n'a été battuë de personne, & où il n'est pas permis d'entrer sans s'être lavé les piez. Ceux qui n'ont qu'une Rhétorique de Collége, tachent de plaire au peuple par des narrations puériles. Mais ceux

ceux qui sont instruits des mystéres de la sagesse savent faire un meilleur choix. Ils préférent les vertus Chrétiennes de l'Empereur, à ses vertus purement humaines, & lui laissent donner de basses loüanges par ceux qui n'ont que de bas sentimens. Constantin aiant heureusement réüni en sa personne la sagesse sacrée, & la sagesse prophane, la sience de l'Eglise qui se rapporte au service de Dieu, & la sience du monde qui tend à l'utilité des hommes, celle-ci pourra étre loüée en d'autres assemblées comme une sience qui est en effet fort loüable, & qui est fort utile à la société civile, bien qu'elle soit beaucoup inférieure à la sience de l'Eglise. Mais ceux qui ont le droit d'entrer dans le Sanctuaire ne doivent parler en presence des Fidéles, que des vertus surnaturelles de l'Empereur. Que les Fidéles préparent donc leurs oreilles pour écouter les mystéres, qu'ils ouvrent leurs cœurs pour les recevoir, & qu'ils les étendent avec le mouvement d'une joie celeste. Nous suivons des Oracles rendus non par une fureur aveugle, mais par l'Esprit saint. Et ces Oracles-là nous donnent l'idée véritable de l'Empire absolu que Dieu exerce sur tous les étres, de l'Empire légitime que nôtre Prince exerce sur nous à l'imitation de Dieu, de la domination injuste que les Tirans avoient usurpée, & des différens effets de ces différentes maniéres de gouverner. Nous suivrons cette idée, & entrerons dans nôtre matiére.

Nous célébrons aujourd'hui une grande fête, en l'honneur de l'Empereur, de qui nous sommes les sujets fidéles, & nous y faisons paroître une joie extraordinaire suivant l'ordre de Dieu. C'est le souverain Empereur, & qui est seul véritablement Souverain, qui nous exhorte à célébrer cette fête. Celui qui m'honore de son audiance, bien loin d'étre fâché que je parle de la sorte, approuvera mon discours, & reconnoîtra avec moi, que Chap. I.

Dieu

Dieu est infiniment élevé au dessus des étres créez, que son trône est dans le Ciel, & que la terre ne lui sert que de marche-pié. La lumiére qui l'environne, ébloüit par son éclat, & empêche de le regarder. Des armées d'esprits celestes l'entourent comme leur Seigneur & leur Maître. Une multitude incroiable d'Anges, & d'Arcanges tirent de lui toute leur lumiére, comme d'une source inépuisable. Les substances intelligentes qui sont au-de-là du Ciel, publient ses loüanges. Le Ciel est comme un voile bleu, qui sépare ceux qui sont dans le Palais, & ceux de dehors. Le Soleil, la Lune & les autres astres courent au-tour de lui, comme ses Officiers à l'entrée de son Palais, & éclairent par son ordre, les créatures qu'il a placées dans une région ténébreuse. Pourquoi ferois-je difficulté de publier, qu'il est le Seigneur des Empereurs, & le principe de toute domination, puisque je sai que nôtre victorieux Prince lui attribuë la gloire de ses victoires, & célébre continuellement sa grandeur? Les tres-pieux Césars le reconnoissent pour l'unique Auteur de leurs biens, selon les instructions qu'ils ont reçuës de Constantin leur pere. Les armées & les peuples, les habitans des villes & de la campagne, les Magistrats & les Gouverneurs de Province s'assemblent pour lui rendre le culte qui lui est dû, selon les préceptes que le Sauveur leur en a donnez. Enfin les nations les plus éloignées, & les plus contraires en coûtumes & en mœurs conviennent comme par une inclination sécréte de la Nature, de l'invoquer. La terre le reconnoît pour son Seigneur, & déclare aux plantes & aux arbres qu'elle produit, & aux animaux qu'elle porte, qu'elle obéit à ses ordres. Les fontaines & les riviéres disent en leur langage qu'il est l'auteur de tout ce qu'il y a de merveilleux & de surprenant dans leur origine & dans leur cours. Les flots qui sortent du sein

sein de la mer ; & qui au lieu d'innonder la terre, s'élévent jusques au ciel, respectent les bornes qu'il leur a prescrites. La chûte réglée des pluies pendant l'hiver, l'éclair & le bruit des tonnéres, l'agitation des vens, le mouvement que ces vens impriment aux nuées, le découvrent à ceux qui ne sont pas assez éclairez pour le reconnoître d'eux-mêmes. Le Soleil, ce globe resplendissant de lumiére, qui continuë son vaste cours depuis le commencement des siécles, ne reconnoît point d'autre Maître que lui. Mais il suit aussi ses ordres avec tant d'exactitude, qu'il ne s'est jamais écarté du cercle auquel il l'a attaché. La Lune qui a une clarté beaucoup inférieure à celle du Soleil, & qui reçoit tantôt une diminution, & tantôt un accroissement de lumiére, est aussi parfaitement soûmise que lui, aux commandemens du même Maître. La multitude des astres, qui sont attachez au Firmament, & qui y gardent un mouvement si juste, publient que c'est de lui qu'ils reçoivent l'éclat qu'ils répandent. Les cieux annoncent sa gloire, & confessent que leur harmonie vient de lui. La succession continuelle des jours, & des nuits, la vicissitude des saisons, & l'ordre de tout l'univers font voir la grandeur de sa puissance. les puissances invisibles, qui remplissent l'air, chantent ses loüanges. Enfin tout le monde récite des Hymnes en son honneur. Les Cieux qui sont au dessus de nous, & les Chœurs des Anges qui sont au dessus des cieux, le révérent. Les esprits sortis d'une lumiére intellectuelle, l'appelent leur Dieu, & leur Pere. L'éternité qui précéde tous les tems, rend témoignage à sa divinité. Enfin son Verbe & son Fils unique qui est dans toutes choses, avant toutes choses, & aprés toutes choses, le grand Pontife du grand Dieu, qui est plus ancien que le tems, est consacré à son culte, & lui fait des priéres pour nôtre salut. Ce Fils unique

que de Dieu possède une puissance absoluë sur l'Univers, & une gloire égale à celle de son Pere dans son Roiaume. C'est une lumiére qui est au dessus de toutes les créatures, & qui sépare les substances qui n'ont point de principe, ni de commencement d'avec celles qui en ont. Il procéde du sein de la divinité, qui n'a ni commencement ni fin, & éclaire de la lumiére de sa sagesse, qui est une lumiére infiniment plus éclatante que celle du Soleil, la région qui est au dessus du Ciel. Ce Verbe de Dieu, est le Seigneur du monde, qui se répand sur toutes les choses, & dans toutes les choses visibles & invisibles.

Chap. 2. C'est de sa main que nôtre Empereur tres-chéri de Dieu, a reçu la souveraine puissance, pour gouverner son Etat, comme Dieu gouverne le monde. Le Fils unique de Dieu régne avant tous les tems, & régnera aprés tous les tems avec son Pere. Nôtre Empereur qui est aimé par le Verbe, régne depuis plusieurs années par un écoulement, & une participation de l'autorité divine. Le Sauveur attire au service de son Pere, le monde qu'il gouverne comme son roiaume, & l'Empereur soûmet ses sujets à l'obéïssance du Verbe. Le Sauveur commun de tous les hommes chasse par sa vertu divine, comme un bon Pasteur, les puissances rebelles qui volent dans l'air & qui tendent des piéges à son troupeau. Le Prince qu'il protége, défait avec son sécours les ennemis de la vérité, les réduit à son obéïssance, & les condamne au chatiment qu'ils méritent. Le Verbe qui est la raison substantielle, qui existe avant le monde, jette dans les esprits des semences de sience & de vérité, par lesquelles il les rend capables de servir son Pere. Nôtre Empereur qui brûle d'un zele sincére pour la gloire de Dieu, rappele toutes les nations à sa connoissance, & leur annonce à haute voix la vérité, comme l'Interpréte du Verbe. Le

Sauveur

Sauveur ouvre la porte du roiaume de son pere à ceux qui y arrivent d'ici bas. L'Empereur qui se propose continuellement son exemple, extermine l'erreur, assemble les personnes de piété dans les Eglises, & prend tout le soin possible pour sauver le vaisseau, de la conduite duquel il est chargé. Il est le seul de tous ceux qui ont gouverné cét Empire, qui ait reçu de Dieu la grace de solenniser trois fois les jeux & les réjoüissances publiques, qui se renouvellent de dix en dix ans, à conter depuis sa proclamation. Ce n'est pas aussi en l'honneur des puissances terrestres, ni des démons qui trompent le peuple, qu'il célébre cette fête, comme faisoient ses prédécesseurs. Ce n'est qu'en l'honneur de Dieu, à qui il rend d'humbles actions de graces, des faveurs qu'il a reçuës de sa bonté. Il ne salit point son Palais du sang des victimes selon l'usage prophane des anciens, il ne tâche point de se rendre les démons propices par le feu, & par la fumée des sacrifices. Il offre au Seigneur souverain de l'univers son cœur comme une pure & une agréable victime. Cette victime est pure & agréable, non par ce qu'elle a d'extérieur, ni par le sang qui coule de ses veines, mais par ce qu'elle a d'intérieur, par les mouvemens par lesquels elle se porte à Dieu, par la sincérité de sa piété, par la ferveur de ses priéres, par la sainteté de ses actions. Il immole cette hostie comme des prémices du roiaume, qu'il gouverne, & il immole ensuite comme un Pasteur le troupeau qu'il assujettit à l'obéïssance de la foi.

Dieu reçoit avec joie ce sacrifice, louë la piété du Pontife qui le lui présente, récompense de nouveaux dons les nouveaux effets de sa piété, & ajoûte de nouvelles années à son Empire. Il lui fait la grace singuliére d'associer à chaque dizaine d'années, un des Princes ses enfans, & de l'élever sur le trône. En la dixiéme année de son régne, il Chap. 3.

a com-

a communiqué à Constantin son fils-aîné l'autorité souveraine. Il l'a communiquée au second en la vintiéme année, & il l'a communiquée au troisiéme en celle-ci, dont la solennité nous assemble. Maintenant que nous entrons dans la quatriéme dizaine, & que la proclamation des trois Césars, est achevée; nous voions l'accomplissement de la prophétie conçuë en ces termes: *Les Saints du tres-Haut recevront l'Empire*; Dieu a multiplié de la sorte les années, & la postérité de nôtre tres-pieux Empereur, & fait fleurir son régne avec la même vigueur, que s'il ne faisoit que de commencer. Il a préparé lui-même la cérémonie que nous célébrons, quand il lui a accordé la victoire sur ses ennemis, & qu'il l'a proposé à son siécle, comme un modéle tres-accompli de piété. Cét Empereur gouverne par les Princes ses enfans, les sujets les plus éloignez de sa capitale, comme le Soleil éclaire de ses raions les peuples les plus éloignez de sa sphére. Il nous a soûmis nous autres, qui habitons l'Orient, à la conduite d'un fils tout-à-fait digne de lui. Il a donné d'autres peuples au second, & d'autres au troisiéme. Ce sont comme autant d'effusions qu'il fait de sa lumiére, pour éclairer les sujets qui habitent les Provinces. Il a attaché les quatre Césars au char de l'Empire, qu'il conduit lui-même par sa sagesse, & par le moien duquel il parcourt l'univers, l'honore & le réjoüit de sa presence. Il léve les yeux au ciel, pour y chercher l'idée de la domination, qu'il exerce sur la terre. Il garde dans l'étenduë de ses Etats, la même forme de gouvernement, que Dieu garde dans tout l'univers. Il use du droit que Dieu a accordé à l'homme seul, d'imiter son pouvoir Monarchique. Le gouvernement d'un seul est sans doute le plus parfait. Le gouvernement opposé qui est possédé également par plusieurs, est toûjours rempli de con-

confusion & de desordre. Aussi n'y a-t-il qu'un Dieu. La pluralité des Dieux en détruiroit non seulement l'unité, mais la nature, de sorte que s'il y avoit plusieurs Dieux, il n'y en auroit aucun. Il n'y a qu'un souverain & indépendant Seigneur de l'univers, qui n'a qu'une parole & une loi qui n'est point exprimée par des syllabes sensibles, ni imprimée sur le papier ou sur les autres matiéres que le tems détruit, mais qui est vivante & subsistante par elle-même, & qui prépare le roiaume de son Pere à ceux qui lui sont soûmis. Les armées celestes, les esprits invisibles, les Anges qui rendent à Dieu un service continuel, & qui gouvernent le monde par ses ordres, le suivent comme leur Chef, comme leur Général, comme un souverain Pontife, comme le Prophéte de Dieu, comme l'Ange du grand Conseil, comme la splendeur de la lumiére de son Pere, qui l'a donné en qualité de Verbe, de Loi, & de Sagesse, à ceux qui sont soûmis à son obéïssance. Ce Verbe pénétrant toutes les créatures, & se répandant au milieu d'elles, leur communique avec abondance les bien-faits de son Pere, & donne aux hommes qui sont son image, une portion de sa puissance, & les vertus dont ils ont besoin. Il n'y a que Dieu qui soit sage de sa nature, qui soit bon, & qui soit puissant. Il est la source de l'innocence & de la justice, de la raison & de la sagesse, de la lumiére & de la vie. Il est le dispensateur de la vérité & de la vertu, le distributeur des roiaumes, & de l'autorité de les gouverner.

Comment l'homme sait-il que Dieu posséde tous ces avantages? Comment de si hautes véritez sont-elles venuës jusques-à nous? Comment une langue aussi grossiére que la nôtre a-t-elle appris à expliquer des mystéres si relevez? Qui est-ce qui a vû le Roi invisible, & qui a découvert en lui tant de merveilles? Nous connoissons par les sens les Chap. 4.

objets ſenſibles, les organes corporels ſervent à voir les corps, & à les toucher. Mais jamais les yeux du corps n'ont vû le roiaume inviſible. Jamais mortel n'a découvert la beauté de la ſageſſe. Qui a vû la juſtice? Qui a conçu l'idée de la ſouveraine puiſſance, & de la légitime domination? Qui a montré aux hommes une ſubſtance ſpirituelle, & qui n'a ni traits corporels, ni figure extérieure? Le Verbe de Dieu qui par ſon immenſité eſt preſent en tous lieux, eſt ſans doute le ſeul qui a expliqué ces véritez ſi importantes & ſi ſublimes. Il eſt le principe & comme le Pere de la ſubſtance raiſonnable & intellectuelle, qui eſt la principale partie de l'homme. Il eſt uni au Pere, & fait couler de lui ſur les hommes qui ſont ſes enfans les eaux de ſes graces. C'eſt de cette ſource que procédent les notions de raiſon & de ſageſſe, de prudence & de juſtice que les Grecs & les Barbares ont euës naturellement, ſans les avoir reçuës d'aucun maître. C'eſt de-là que viennent les arts & les ſiences, la philoſophie, l'amour de l'étude, la connoiſſance du bien, le zele pour le ſervice de Dieu, & le deſir de mener une vie conforme à ſes préceptes. C'eſt de ce principe que l'homme a tiré l'autorité & le pouvoir qu'il exerce ſur les créatures inférieures. Cette raiſon ſouveraine qui a créé les eſprits raiſonnables, qui leur a imprimé l'image de Dieu, qui leur a communiqué l'autorité, & qui leur a enſeigné à commander & à obéïr, leur a promis le Roiaume du Ciel, & leur en a donné un gage, & une aſſurance par ſa preſence, & par ſa vie corporelle & viſible. Il a exhorté tous les hommes à ſe préparer à ce Roiaume, & à ſe couvrir de la robe avec laquelle il y faut entrer. Il a répandu ſa Doctrine par tout le monde où le Soleil répand ſa lumiére. Il a appelé tous les peuples au Roiaume de ſon Pere, & leur a donné l'eſpérance de le poſſéder.

Nôtre

Nôtre Empereur tres-chéri de Dieu joüit dés cette vie de cette eſpérance. Il eſt paré des vertus qui ſont comme des ruiſſeaux qui coulent de cette ſource inépuiſable. Il a la raiſon, la ſageſſe, & la bonté par la participation de la raiſon éternelle, de la ſageſſe increée, de la bonté infinie. Il eſt juſte, tempérant, & vaillant par la juſtice, par la tempérance, & par la vaillance que Dieu lui a communiquée. Il mérite avec juſtice le titre d'Empereur puis qu'il imite autant qu'il peut le maître des Empereurs, & qu'il tâche de gouverner ſon Etat avec une juſtice qui ait quelque rapport à celle avec laquelle Dieu gouverne l'Univers. Quiconque prend une conduite contraire, quiconque renonce au ſouverain Seigneur de l'Univers, & qui au lieu de ſe parer des vertus convenables à un Empereur ſe ſoüille de crimes, au lieu de ſe revêtir de douceur s'arme de cruauté, au lieu d'exercer la libéralité ne répand que le poiſon de la haine, au lieu de garder une conduite pleine de modération & de ſageſſe n'agit que par légéreté & par emportement, quiconque enfin au lieu de ſuivre la lumiére de la raiſon s'égare & s'abîme dans les débauches, s'abandonne aux paſſions, & tombe dans l'impiété il déclare la guerre à Dieu, commet des impietez, & des meurtres. Quelqu'empire que puiſſe exercer celui qui eſt ſujet à ces vices, jamais il ne méritera le titre d'Empereur. Comment celui qui porte les marques & les caractéres des Démons pourroit-il étre l'image de l'autorité abſoluë avec laquelle Dieu gouverne l'Univers? Comment celui qui eſt aſſujetti à l'obéïſſance d'un grand nombre de maîtres cruels, pourroit-il étre le maître des autres? Sans doute on ne ſauroit commander quand on eſt eſclave, & que l'on obéït à la volupté, à l'amour des femmes, à la paſſion du bien amaſſé par des voies injuſtes, à la colére, à la crainte, & à tous les

Chap. 5.

esprits impurs qui font leur joie de nôtre ruine. Avoüons-donc qu'il n'y a point d'autre Empereur que le nôtre, puisqu'il n'y en a point qui soit libre comme lui, ni qui soit comme lui au dessus des passions, & qui méprise les plaisirs, & se prive même de ceux qui sont innocens, & légitimes. Il est maître de sa colére & de son courage. Il est vainqueur non seulement des ennemis étrangers dont il a domté l'orgueil, mais des domestiques, & de ses propres mouvemens dont il a réprimé la violence, il imite Dieu comme son modéle, & le represente comme un miroir. Il represente la tempérance, la justice, la valeur, la piété, la sagesse dont Dieu lui a donné & le commandement, & l'exemple. Il se connoît fort bien, & sait que les vertus qu'il posséde, sont des dons du Ciel. Il porte seul la robe de pourpre pour marque de son autorité, & mérite seul d'avoir cette autorité parce qu'il implore jour & nuit le secours du Pere celeste, & qu'il brûle du desir de parvenir à son Roiaume. Comme il sait qu'il n'y a rien ici bas qui ne soit sujet au changement, & à la corruption, & qui ne passe avec la même rapidité que l'eau d'un fleuve qui se hâte de se précipiter dans l'Océan, il souhaite avec une ardeur incroiable de devenir sujet d'un Roiaume, où Dieu donne des biens stables & permanens. Il porte sa pensée & son ambition jusques à ce Roiaume. Il aspire à la lumiére qui y brille, & en comparaison de laquelle tout ce qu'il y a sur la terre de plus éclatant, n'est que ténébres. Le soin que les Princes prennent de gouverner leurs sujets ne s'étend point au de-là d'une vie qui d'elle-même est fort courte, & sujette à la mort. Il n'est pas beaucoup plus considérable que celui que les Pasteurs prennent de leurs troupeaux, & il est d'autant plus fâcheux & plus incommode que les hommes sont plus difficiles à gouverner que les bêtes. Les loüan-

loüanges des flateurs, & les applaudissemens des peuples sont plus de peine à l'Empereur, qu'ils ne lui donnent de plaisir. Il a l'ame naturellement trop ferme, & un trop grand zele de maintenir la vigueur des loix & de la discipline, en obligeant tout le monde à faire exactement son devoir, pour caresser bassement le peuple. Quand il voit de nombreuses armées soûmises à ses ordres, il n'en conçoit ni de l'étonnement, ni de la vanité. Il fait à l'heure-même réflexion sur soi-même, & se reconnoît sujet à toutes les foiblesses de nôtre nature. Il se moque des habits à fleurs rehaussées d'or, de la pourpre Impériale, & du diadéme, & il déplore la foiblesse du peuple qui admire ces ornemens. Il recherche d'autres ornemens fort différens, & se pare non le corps mais l'esprit par la connoissance de Dieu, par la tempérance, la justice, la piété, & les autres vertus qui conviennent à un Prince. Il regarde les richesses que la plûpart des hommes desirent avec une ardeur si excessive, l'or, l'argent, & les pierreries, comme des pierres, & des matiéres inutiles. Il ne les estime que ce qu'elles valent, & est tres-persuadé qu'elles ne préservent d'aucun mal, qu'elles ne détournent aucune maladie, & qu'elles n'exemtent point de la mort. Il ne laisse pas de s'en servir pour l'utilité de ses sujets. Mais il rit en même tems de ceux qui sont si simples que de les admirer. Il a l'yvrognerie en horreur & s'abstient de tous ces méts si recherchez, & si délicats, qui ne servent qu'à irriter l'appetit, & à provoquer à l'intempérance. Il croit qu'ils conviennent à tout autre plûtôt qu'à lui, qu'ils sont extrémement préjudiciables, & qu'ils obscurcissent l'esprit. La grandeur de son ame, & la connoissance qu'il a des véritez divines, lui font rechercher des avantages plus excellens que ceux de la vie presente. Il aspire sans cesse à un Empire qui

n'a point de fin. Il s'en approche par les mouvemens de sa piété. Il y porte ses sujets par ses préceptes, & par ses exemples. Dieu ne laisse pas aussi les vertus de ce Prince sans récompense. Il lui donne dés cette vie des gages de celle qu'il lui reserve dans l'autre. Il le couronne de prospérité, & de gloire. Il prolonge la durée de son régne. Il en rend la trentiéme année célébre par cette cérémonie, où l'Univers fait éclater les marques d'une joie publique; & où il est probable que les Anges entrent dans les mêmes sentimens que les hommes. Dieu-même se réjoüit comme un bon Pere de la piété de ses enfans, & accorde un long & heureux régne à l'Empereur qui leur a enseigné les devoirs de cette piété. Il ne se contente pas de l'avoir maintenu trente ans sur le trône. Il donne à son Empire une durée qui n'a ni diminution ni accroissement, parcequ'elle n'a ni commencement, ni fin. C'est une durée dont on ne sauroit découvrir le centre, & où l'on ne sauroit marquer ni un tems present, ni un tems passé, ni un tems avenir. Le passé n'est plus, l'avenir n'est pas encore. Le present passe plus vîte que la pensée. L'éternité n'est point soûmise au calcul des hommes. Elle ne reléve que de Dieu, à qui elle rend la gloire qu'elle a reçuë de lui. Dieu la gouverne du haut du Ciel. Il la tient non enchaînée avec une chaîne d'or comme disent les Poëtes, mais attachée à sa sagesse avec une chaîne invisible, & a placé au milieu d'elle, les années, les mois, les jours & les nuits dans un ordre qui a une beauté merveilleuse. L'éternité n'a d'elle-même aucunes bornes. Elle s'étend à l'infini. Mais Dieu en a comme entrecouppé le milieu par la distinction des tems. C'est comme une ligne droite qu'il a divisée par plusieurs points. Il a mis les nombres dans son unité, & lui a donné diverses formes au lieu qu'elle n'en avoit aucune. Il a produit

produit d'abord une matiére informe qui devoit recevoir toutes les substances. Il a donné ensuite des qualitez à la matiére, & l'a embellie par le nombre de deux, au lieu qu'elle n'avoit auparavant nulle beauté. Par le nombre de trois il a composé de matiére & de forme un corps capable des trois dimensions de la longueur, de la largeur, & de la profondeur. Aiant ensuite doublé le nombre de deux, il a inventé les quatre élémens, la terre, l'eau, l'air, & le feu comme des sources d'où coulent tous les biens qui sont dans le monde. Au reste le nombre de quatre produit celui de dix; car en ajoûtant un, deux, trois, & quatre ensemble, on trouve dix pour produit. Le nombre de dix étant multiplié par celui de trois donne l'espace d'un mois. Douze mois mesurent le cours du Soleil. Voila comment la suite des années & la révolution des saisons ont embelli le tems pour la satisfaction, & le plaisir de ceux à qui Dieu en accorde la joüissance. Il a mis le tems au milieu de l'éternité & a marqué des points dans ces vastes espaces comme les bornes de la carriére où les Atlétes courent, comme les hoteleries où les voiageurs se reposent. Ce souverain Seigneur du monde à distingué les parties du tems, en attribuant au jour l'éclat de la lumiére, & à la nuit l'obscurité des ténébres, qui ne sont dissipées que par la foible lueur des étoiles. Il a embelli le Ciel par le Soleil, par la Lune, & par les Astres, comme un voile par une agréable diversité de couleurs. Aprés avoir étendu l'air il l'a rempli des espéces si différentes des oiseaux. Il a affermi la terre comme au milieu, & au centre de l'Univers, & l'a entourée de l'Océan comme d'un vêtement bleu. Il en a fait la demeure & tout ensemble, la mere & la nourrice des animaux. Il l'a arrosée des eaux des pluies, & des fontaines. Il l'a couverte de plantes, & de fleurs. Il y a formé l'homme à son

image. Il lui a inſpiré une ame intelligente, & raiſonnable, capable de ſience & de ſageſſe, & lui a donné le droit de commander aux animaux, qu'il n'avoit faits que pour ſon uſage. Ce n'eſt que pour la commodité de l'homme qu'il a rendu la mer navigable, & la terre féconde. Il lui a donné un eſprit capable de diſcipline. Il lui a aſſujetti les animaux qui volent dans l'air, & qui nagent dans la mer. Il lui a permis de contempler le Ciel, & de découvrir le mouvement & le cours des aſtres. Il lui a accordé à lui-ſeul la connoiſſance de la Religion, & le droit de l'appeler ſon Pere, & de publier ſes loüanges.

Chap. 6. Outre tout ce que je viens de dire le Créateur de l'Univers a partagé l'année en quatre ſaiſons. L'hiver eſt terminé par le printems, qui bien qu'il commence l'année ne laiſſe pas d'en étre auſſi comme le milieu, & de la tenir en quelque ſorte d'équilibre. L'été ſuccéde avec ſes ardeurs à l'agréable température du printems. L'autonne tempére les ardeurs de l'été & eſt comme deſtiné au repos. Enfin l'hiver retourne aprés l'autonne, engraiſſe la terre par ſes eaux, & la prépare aux fleurs du printems. Le ſouverain Seigneur de l'Univers aiant partagé de la ſorte les ſiécles en quatre ſaiſons avec une ſageſſe admirable, en a confié le gouvernement à ſon Fils unique. Celui-ci l'aiant accepté comme un heritage qui lui vient de la bonté de ſon Pere, unit par une merveilleuſe harmonie toutes les piéces qui ſont renfermées au deſſus & au deſſous du Ciel. Il pourvoit avec un ſoin nonpareil aux néceſſitez des créatures raiſonnables qui habitent ſur la terre. Il a mis des bornes à leur vie, & a voulu que cette vie qui a des bornes, fût comme le paſſage à une autre qui n'en a point. Il leur a enſeigné qu'il y a un état heureux dont jouïront ceux qui s'en ſeront rendus dignes par leur piété, comme il y a des ſupplices pré-

préparez à ceux qui les auront méritez par leurs crimes. Alors il distribuera les couronnes à peu-prés de la même sorte qu'on les distribuë aux Vainqueurs aprés les combats. Il déclare dés maintenant que la plus magnifique de toutes les récompenses est reservée à nôtre religieux Empereur, & il lui en donne dés ici un gage par cette cérémonie qu'il lui permet de célébrer avec tant de magnificence, & tant de pompe en cette année dont le nombre est produit par la multiplication réciproque de celui de trois & de dix, qui sont des nombres parfaits. Le nombre de trois est le premier produit de l'unité. L'unité est la mere de tous les nombres. Elle préside aux mois, & aux années, au changement des saisons, & à la révolution des siécles. Elle est le principe, & la base de la multitude. Elle est stable, & fixe au même état. Au lieu que la multitude croît, ou diminue par l'addition, ou par la soustraction des nombres, l'unité ne souffre aucun changement & ne reçoit ni accroissement, ni diminution. Elle est l'image de cette substance indivisible, & séparée de toutes les autres, & par la puissance de laquelle subsiste tout l'Univers. L'unité produit tous les nombres en ajoûtant les uns aux autres, ou en les multipliant les uns par les autres. On ne sauroit concevoir le nombre sans l'unité, au lieu que l'unité subsiste par elle-même, & indépendemment des nombres, qu'elle est plus excellente qu'eux, qu'elle les fait, & n'est faite par aucun. Le nombre de trois approche fort de la perfection de l'unité. Il ne peut étre divisé, & est le premier de tous les nombres composez du pair, & de l'impair. Le nombre de deux qui est pair étant joint à lunité, fait le nombre de trois qui est le premier des impairs. Le nombre de trois est le premier qui enseigne aux hommes la justice, & l'égalité parce qu'il a un commencement parfaite-

ment égal au milieu, & un milieu parfaitement égal à la fin. Il est une image sensible des trois personnes Divines, dont la nature n'a ni commencement, ni principe; & est le principe & le commencement, la source & l'origine de tous les étres. Ainsi le nombre de trois peut étre consideré avec raison comme le commencement de toutes choses. Celui de dix est comme la fin, il termine tout, il est parfait, & renferme toutes les espéces des proportions & des nombres, tous les tons & tous les accens de l'harmonie. L'unité produit par addition le nombre de dix, & tourne deux, trois, & quatre fois autour de lui jusques à ce que par dix dizaines elle soit parvenuë au nombre de cent. Ces dizaines font continuellement le même cercle & retournent sans cesse aux mêmes bornes. Dix unitez font une dizaine. L'unité est dix fois dans le même nombre de dix, qui est la fin, le terme, la borne, & la perfection de l'unité : Il est le terme qui arréte les nombres, & qui les empêche de s'étendre, & il est la perfection de l'unité. Lorsque le nombre de trois multiplie celui de dix, il produit celui de trente, qui est un nombre fort naturel. Il tient le même rang parmi les dizaines, que le nombre de trois parmi les unitez. Il est la mesure & la régle du cours que tient la plus éclatante des planétes aprés le Soleil. La Lune emploie un mois composé de trente jours à parcourir l'espace qui s'étend depuis le point, où elle se sépare du Soleil, jusques celui où elle s'y rejoint. Quand elle a fourni cette carriére, elle se léve comme de nouveau, & fait de nouveaux jours avec une nouvelle lumiére. Elle est parée de dix unitez, de trois dizaines, & de dix ternaires, s'il est permis d'user de ce terme. Le régne de nôtre victorieux Empereur, joüit des mêmes avantages par la libéralité du souverain Seigneur de l'univers. Il refleurit en nos jours, & prend

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un nouveau commencement. Il a rempli les trente années, s'étendra au de-là, & servira d'assurance & de gage de la possession du bonheur qui est promis dans un autre siécle, où des millions d'Astres plus éclatans, sans comparaison que le Soleil, brillent au-tour du souverain Empereur, par la splendeur qu'il leur communique, où l'ame joüit de la vuë d'une beauté incorruptible & immortelle, où il n'y a point de douleur, & où il n'y a que des plaisirs innocens, où le tems n'a point de bornes, & où il n'est point mesuré par l'espace des jours, des mois & des années, où la durée est égale à une vie qui n'a point de fin.

C'est un siécle où la lumiére n'est point répanduë par le Soleil, par la Lune, ni par les autres Astres; mais par le Verbe qui est Dieu, & Fils unique de nôtre Dieu & de nôtre Roi. C'est pour cela que la Théologie mystique l'appele le Soleil de justice, & la lumiére des lumiéres. C'est pour le même sujet que nous croions qu'il éclaire les puissances celestes par les raions de sa justice & de sa sagesse, & que suivant ses promesses, il reçoit les ames saintes, non dans la partie convéxe du ciel visible, mais dans son sein. L'œil du corps n'a point vû, l'oreille n'a point entendu, l'esprit entouré du corps n'a point connu ce qui est préparé aux personnes de piété, comme à vous tres-religieux Empereur, qui étes le seul que Dieu ait choisi, pour purger la vie des hommes des crimes dont elle étoit toute soüillée, & à qui il ait montré le signe de nôtre Rédemption, par la force duquel il a vaincu la mort, & triomphé de ses ennemis. Vous avez opposé aux statuës des démons ce monument de vôtre victoire, ce fleau des Idoles, & vous avez domté l'orgueil des barbares & des démons, qui sont une autre espéce d'ennemis barbares.

Comme nous ne subsistons que par l'union de Chap. 7.

deux ſubſtances, dont l'une eſt corporelle & viſible, l'autre ſpirituelle & inviſible, nous avons auſſi à combattre deux ſortes d'ennemis, dont les uns ſont viſibles & déclarez; & les autres inviſibles & ſecrets. Les premiers attaquent nos corps avec des armes ſenſibles. Les ſeconds dreſſent des piéges à nos ames par des machines fort ſubtiles, & imperceptibles aux ſens. Les ennemis que l'on voit, ſont des peuples auſſi ſauvages & auſſi farouches que les bêtes, qui font irruption contre les nations civiliſées, & polies, qui ravagent la campagne, déſolent les Villes, & mettent tout à feu & à ſang. Les ennemis que l'on ne voit point, & qui ſont plus cruels que ceux que l'on voit, ce ſont les démons qui corrompent l'eſprit de l'homme, qui rempliſſent l'air, & qui par les machines déteſtables de l'impiété, ont réduit tous les peuples ſoûs leur tirannie, de ſorte que ne connoiſſant plus le vrai Dieu, & ne l'honorant non plus que s'il n'étoit point, ils en ont introduit d'étrangers & d'imaginaires. C'eſt de cette ſource que procéde l'erreur, qui leur a fait prendre la génération des corps, pour une divinité, & la corruption de ces mêmes corps pour une autre divinité contraire. Ils ont adoré ſoûs le nom de Venus, cette premiére divinité, qui préſide à la naiſſance, & ſoûs le nom de Pluton, la ſeconde qui cauſe la mort & qui enléve les richeſſes. Les hommes de ce tems-là ont crû que la cauſe de la naiſſance étoit une divinité, parce qu'ils ne connoiſſoient point d'autre vie, que celle qui commence par cette naiſſance corporelle & ſenſible. Ils ont crû auſſi que la cauſe de la mort étoit une autre divinité, parce qu'ils ſe ſont imaginez qu'il n'y avoit rien au delà, & qu'ils n'ont pas porté plus loin leurs penſées, ni leurs eſpérances. D'ailleurs la créance, où ils ont été, qu'ils n'auroient aucun comte à rendre aprés la deſtruction que la mort produit, leur a donné

donné la licence de s'abandonner aux crimes les plus énormes, & de commettre des abominations qui ne pourroient étre expiées par mille morts. Ils n'ont point eu Dieu devant les yeux. Ils ne se sont point attendus à paroître à son jugement; ils n'ont reconnu que la mort pour Juge, & dans la créance qu'elle détruit l'homme entier, ils l'ont adorée comme une divinité fort puissante & fort riche. Ils n'ont pas révéré la mort seule comme une divinité. Ils ont révéré avant elle & plus profondément qu'elle, tout ce qui pouvoit contribuer à leur rendre la vie commode & agréable. Ils ont pris pour un Dieu le plaisir du corps, les alimens, les fruits des arbres, la bonne chére, l'yvrognerie, les cupiditez les plus grossiéres, & les plus charnelles. C'est de-là que sont venus les mystéres de Cerés & de Proserpine, l'enlévement de Proserpine fait par Pluton, qui la ramena depuis, & la rendit. C'est de-là que sont venus les mystéres de Bacchus, où l'on célébre les victoires qu'il remporta sur Hercule. C'est de-là que sont venus les adultéres de Cupidon & de Venus, la passion furieuse que Jupiter avoit pour les femmes, & pour Ganiméde, & toutes les autres fables qui representent les Dieux comme d'infames esclaves de la volupté. C'a été par ces traits empoisonnez de l'impiété & de la superstition que les cruels ennemis de Dieu, le souverain des Empereurs, ont percé tous les hommes, & les ont tellement assujettis à leur injuste domination, qu'ils les ont obligez de consacrer leurs statuës, & d'élever des temples en leur honneur, dans toutes les parties du monde. Ceux qui tenoient en ce tems-là la place des souverains étoient si fort prévenus de cette erreur, qu'ils sacrifioient leurs proches à ces faux Dieux, qu'ils poursuivoient à main armée les défenseurs de la vérité, qu'ils faisoient la guerre non aux étrangers, mais à leurs amis, à leurs

pareus & à leurs freres, & enfin à tous ceux qui adoroient le vrai Dieu, & qui lui rendoient le culte solide qui consiste dans la sainteté des mœurs, & dans la piété. Voila comment ces Princes insensez ont immolé aux démons, comme des victimes, des hommes qui étoient consacrez au service du Seigneur & du Maître de tous les Princes. Ces illustres témoins de la Religion, & ces généreux défenseurs de la piété se couvrirent de la patience, & mêprisérent tous les genres de mort. Ils se moquérent du fer, du feu, des clous, des dens des bêtes, des abîmes de la mer, de la cruauté avec laquelle on leur coupa les membres, on leur créva les yeux, on les laissa sans alimens, & on les accabla de travail dans les mines. L'amour dont ils brûloient, pour leur Roi, leur fit trouver des délices dans ces tourmens. Les femmes firent paroître dans ces combats un courage égal à celui des hommes, & remportérent de semblables victoires. Quelques-unes aiant été ménacées de la prostitution, aimérent mieux perdre la vie, que la pudeur. Voila comment les fidéles sujets du souverain Maître de l'Univers, soûtinrent généreusement les attaques des Idolâtres. Cependant les démons qui sont les ennemis du culte de Dieu, & du salut des hommes, prenoient un singulier plaisir à voir répandre le sang qui leur étoit offert. Qu'étoit-il juste, qu'étoit-il raisonnable que Dieu fit alors en faveur de ses serviteurs opprimez? Pouvoit il les abandonner? Un sage Pilote a-t-il jamais manqué d'emploier toute son adresse pour sauver le vaisseau qu'il a entrepris de conduire? Un vaillant Général a-t-il jamais livré son armée aux ennemis? Un bon Pasteur a-t-il jamais négligé le soin d'une brebis égarée? N'a-t-il pas mis le reste du troupeau en sureté, & n'est-il pas allé aprés cela chercher la brebis, à dessein même de combattre les bêtes les plus cruelles qui

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la voudroient dévorer ? Nôtre Pasteur a conservé ses oüailles raisonnables. Nôtre Pilote a preservé son vaisseau du naufrage. Nôtre Général a conservé son armée. Il a secondé la valeur de ceux qui combattoient pour ses intérêts. Il a loüé leur zele & leur constance. Il a distribué une couronne immortelle à ceux qui sont morts pour son service, & les a placez parmi les Anges. Il a retenu les autres pendant quelque tems sur la terre, afin qu'ils y servissent comme d'une semence pour faire revivre la piété, & qu'aprés avoir été spectateurs du châtiment des impies, ils en pussent aussi être témoins. Quand il lui a plû d'étendre son bras, & de se venger de ses ennemis, il les a frappez avec une main invisible, & les a contraints de revoquer solennellement leurs édits, & de renoncer à l'impiété. Il a élevé au même tems ceux qui étoient abbaissez, & a opéré la plûpart de ces merveilles par le ministére de son serviteur. La piété de nôtre Empereur lui fait recevoir avec joie ce titre de serviteur de Dieu. Il l'a opposé seul à ses ennemis, & l'a fait triompher seul de toutes leurs forces. Ils étoient en grand nombre, parce qu'ils étoient les amis des démons, qui sont aussi en grand nombre. Ou plûtôt ils n'étoient rien deslors, puisqu'ils ne sont rien maintenant, & qu'ils ne paroissent plus. Nôtre Empereur que nôtre Dieu a établi, demeure seul comme sa fidéle image. Les tirans qui ne connoissoient point Dieu, ont enlevé les personnes de piété par les meurtres les plus cruels & les plus barbares. L'Empereur, à l'imitation du Sauveur, a conservé les tirans-mêmes, & leur a enseigné la douceur, & la piété. Il a vaincu les deux sortes d'ennemis, que jai dit que nous avions à combattre. Il a vaincu les hommes les plus barbares, en les dépoüillant de leurs mœurs farouches, & en les accoûtumant à une maniére de vivre conforme à la raison, & aux loix.

loix. Et il a vaincu les démons, qui sont les ennemis invisibles, en rendant leur défaite toute publique, & en publiant les avantages que le Sauveur avoit remportez sur eux. Il y a long-tems que ce Sauveur commun de tous les hommes, a défait invisiblement ces esprits invisibles. Mais l'Empereur les a poursuivis comme son ministre; & a partagé leurs dépoüilles entre ses soldats.

Chap. 8. L'Empereur aiant remarqué que le peuple qui n'a que l'ignorance en partage, régardoit avec une crainte respectueuse, ces statuës d'or & d'argent que la superstition avoit fabriquées, crut les devoir ôter comme des piéges, qui avoient été dressez à dessein de faire tomber ceux qui marchent dans un lieu obscur. Il n'eut pas besoin pour ce dessein de la puissance de ses armées. Il n'emploia qu'un ou deux de ses domestiques qu'il envoia dans les Provinces. Ils y allérent presque seuls, & sans autre force que celle qu'ils tiroient du zele de l'Empereur, & de leur propre piété. Ils passérent au travers des peuples Idolâtres. Ils pénétrérent les retraites les plus secréttes que l'erreur eût aux Villes ou à la campagne. Ils obligérent les Prêtres des Idoles à les tirer des lieux, où ils les avoient cachées. Ce qu'ils ne pûrent faire sans attirer les railleries de tout le monde. Ils ôtérent ensuite à ces statuës les ornemens, dont elles étoient déguisées, & en découvrirent toute la laideur. Enfin les aiant fait fondre, ils mirent à part la matiére la plus riche & la plus utile; & laissérent le reste aux Paiens, comme pour leur reprocher la vanité de leur superstition. Au même tems que l'on fondoit ces statuës d'or, & d'argent, l'Empereur fit enlever celles qui n'étoient que de cuivre & de bronze, & entraîner comme des captifs ces Dieux de la Gréce, autrefois si fort vantez par les fables. L'Empereur chercha ensuite s'il y avoit quelque reste de la superstition paienne.

Comme

Comme vn aigle découvre du haut du ciel ce qui se fait sur la terre, il découvrit de son Palais un piége qui avoit été dressé en Phénicie pour faire misérablement périr les ames. C'étoit un bois & un temple consacré à l'honneur d'un infame démon soûs le nom de Venus, non dans une place publique, pour servir d'ornement à une grande Ville, mais en un endroit du mont Liban. On y tenoit une école ouverte d'impudicité. Il y avoit des hommes qui renonçant à la dignité de leur séxe, s'y prostituoient comme des femmes, & qui croioient se rendre la divinité propice par l'infamie de cette monstrueuse corruption. C'étoit un lieu privilégié pour commettre impunément l'adultére, & d'autres abominations. Personne n'en pouvoit arrêter le cours, puisque personne ne pouvoit entrer en ce lieu-là, pour peu qu'il eût d'honnêteté & de retenuë. L'Empereur en aiant eu connoissance, jugea que ce temple ne méritoit pas d'étre éclairé des raions du Soleil, & commanda qu'il fût démoli avec les statuës & les ornemens. Cét ordre fut exécuté à l'heure-même par des soldats, & ceux qui avoient été autre-fois les plus adonnez à la débauche, changérent de mœurs, de peur d'étre châtiez avec la rigueur dont l'Empereur les menaçoit. Ce Prince arracha de la sorte à la malice le masque, dont elle se couvroit pour tromper les simples, & publia hautement la gloire du Sauveur. Les Idoles demeurérent sans appui. Il n'y eut ni Dieu, ni Démon, ni Devin, ni Prêtre qui entreprît de les protéger. La lumiére de la foi avoit dissipé les ténébres du paganisme, & il n'y avoit plus personne qui ne condamnât l'aveuglement de ses ancêtres, & qui ne s'estimât fort heureux d'en avoir été délivré. Les ennemis visibles & invisibles aiant été ainsi vaincus par la force que l'Empereur avoit reçuë du Ciel, l'Univers commença à joüir d'une tres-profonde paix.

On

On ne vit plus de guerres non plus que de Dieux. Il n'y eut plus de sang répandu, comme il y en avoit eu pendant que la superstition étoit en vigueur.

Chap. 9. Comparons l'état present de nos affaires avec le passé, & reconnoissons l'heureux changement qui est survenu. Autrefois il n'y avoit point de Ville qui n'eût des bois, & des temples consacrez en l'honneur des Dieux, & qui n'eût soin de parer & d'enrichir ces temples de divers ornemens. Ceux qui avoient entre les mains l'autorité souveraine, prenoient un grand soin du culte des Dieux. Les peuples les honoroient en public & en particulier; dans les temples, & dans leurs maisons. Ils ont eu pour récompense de leur fausse piété, non la paix, dont nous goûtons maintenant les fruits, mais des divisions domestiques & des guerres civiles qui ont soüillé leurs mains du sang de leurs proches. Ceux qui étoient reconnus pour des Dieux, promettoient aux Princes, de leur découvrir l'avenir. Mais la preuve convainquante de la fausseté de leurs promesses, & de l'imposture de leurs prédictions, est qu'ils n'ont pu prédire leur propre ruine. Jamais aucun de ces Oracles si vantez par l'antiquité, a-t-il prédit l'avénement du Sauveur, & la prédication, par laquelle il devoit instruire les hommes de la divinité de son Pere? Jamais l'Oracle d'Apollon, ou de quelqu'autre démon a-t-il prédit qu'il seroit abandonné? Jamais a-t-il nommé celui qui lui imposeroit un jour silence? Quel Devin a prévû que le culte des Dieux seroit aboli par le culte d'un nouveau Dieu, que la Religion Chrétienne seroit embrassée par toutes les nations; que les Idoles seroient renversées par nôtre saint & pieux Prince & des trophées érigez sur leurs débris? Y a-t-il eu quelque Héros qui ait prédit que ses statuës seroient fonduës, & que la matiére

tiére en seroit emploiée à un usage avantageux à la société civile ? Y a-t-il jamais eu quelque Dieu qui ait dit que ses statuës seroient coupées en lames ? Où étoient leurs protecteurs, lorsque des mains aussi foibles que celles des hommes, ont abbatu les monumens qui avoient été élevez à leur gloire ? Où sont ces esprits inquiets qui allumoient autrefois le feu de la guerre, & qui voient maintenant leurs vainqueurs joüir de la paix ? Où sont les hommes qui avoient mis en eux leur confiance ? Où sont ceux qui aprés avoir porté la superstition jusques au dernier excés, & avoir pris les armes contre les défenseurs de la vérité, sont péris misérablement ? Où sont les Géans qui avoient eu l'insolence de déclarer la guerre à Dieu ? Où sont les dragons qui éguisoient leurs langues contre le souverain Maître de l'univers ? Ces ennemis déclarez du Seigneur absolu des Empereurs ont mis espérance dans la multitude des Dieux, ont marché à la tête de leurs armées qui sembloient être innombrables, & ont porté pour enseignes les images des morts. Mais nôtre Empereur s'étant couvert de la cuirasse de la piété, & aiant opposé à ses ennemis le signe de nôtre salut, a défait les impies & les démons. Il a reconnu à l'heure-même la grace que Dieu lui avoit faite de favoriser ses armes, & lui a rendu la gloire de sa victoire. Il a érigé au milieu de sa capitale l'Etendart, par la force duquel il l'a remportée, & a ordonné à ses sujets de le regarder comme le boulevart de l'Empire. Il a plus particuliérement donné ces préceptes aux gens de guerre qu'aux autres. Il leur a enseigné à mettre leur espérance non dans la constitution de leur corps, ni dans la force de leurs armes, mais dans la protection de Dieu, qui est l'Auteur de tous les biens & le dispensateur de la victoire. Ce que je vai ajoûter, est encore plus merveilleux, & pourroit paroître incroiable.

C'est

C'eſt qu'il leur a preſcrit la méthode de prier, qu'il leur a appris à lever les yeux au Ciel, & à porter leur eſprit juſques à Dieu, pour l'invoquer comme le Dieu des armées, comme l'arbitre des combats, comme le protecteur & le défenſeur de ceux qui le ſervent. Il leur a marqué le jour qui eſt le premier de tous les autres, qui eſt le jour de la lumiére & de la vie, de la reſurrection & de l'immortalité, du Seigneur & du ſalut, comme un jour particuliérement deſtiné à l'exercice de la priére. Il a obſervé lui-même la loi qu'il leur a impoſée. Il a fait de ſon Palais une Egliſe où il adore le Sauveur, & où il ſe nourrit des véritez de l'Ecriture. Il a choiſi pour ſes principaux Officiers des hommes conſacrez au ſervice de Dieu, & recommandables par la pureté de leurs mœurs, & par l'éminence de leur piété. Il révére ce ſigne de nôtre redemption, ce trophée de ſes victoires, ce monument de la défaite de ſes ennemis, par ce qu'il en a éprouvé la puiſſance. Il a vû ſes ennemis mis en déroute, & les armées inviſibles des démons diſſipées par la force toute-puiſſante de ce ſigne. Il a vû l'inſolence de ceux qui avoient déclaré la guerre à Dieu réprimée, la bouche des impies fermée, la calomnie confonduë, les barbares domtez, la fourberie découverte, la ſuperſtition abolie. Pour témoingner ſa réconnoiſſance de ces bien-faits, il a élevé des arcs de triomphe par toute la terre. Il a bâti des temples avec une magnificence convenable à un grand Prince, & a commandé de conſtruire des Oratoires. Les villes & les Provinces ont vû élever en tres-peu de tems des Ouvrages, qui ont publié la libéralité de l'Empereur, & l'impiété des tirans. Il n'y a pas long-tems que comme des chiens furieux, ils déchargérent ſur des édifices qui n'avoient point de ſentiment, la rage qu'ils ne pouvoient décharger ſur Dieu même, qu'ils ruinérent de fond en comble.

ble des lieux consacrez à la priére, & firent voir dans la cruauté de ces destructions l'image d'une Ville abandonnée au pillage. L'insolence qu'ils ont euë de prendre les armes contre Dieu, a été suivie d'un promt châtiment. Ils ont été emportez par un tourbillon, sans qu'il soit resté aucun vestige d'eux. Bien qu'ils fussent en grand nombre, ils ont tous été exterminez par la justice divine. Nôtre Empereur qui avoit marché seul contre ses ennemis à la faveur du signe de nôtre salut, ou plûtôt qui n'avoit pas marché seul, puisqu'il étoit soûtenu par le maître des Empereurs, a élevé bien-tôt aprés dans la Ville de son nom, dans la capitale de Bithynie, & dans plusieurs autres, des Eglises plus magnifiques que celles qui avoient été démolies. Il choisit entre toutes les villes d'Orient, Jérusalem & Antioche, pour y consacrer les plus illustres monumens de sa magnificence & de sa piété. Il entreprit d'élever dans Antioche comme dans la Métropole, un Ouvrage d'une structure toute singuliére, soit que l'on en considére l'étenduë ou la beauté. C'est une Eglise d'une vaste enceinte, & d'une prodigieuse hauteur, qui a huit côtez, qui est accompagnée de divers appartemens, & enrichie de tous les ornemens de l'art. Il fit construire au milieu de la Ville, qui étoit autrefois la capitale de la Palestine & du roiaume des Juifs, à l'endroit du saint Sépulcre une Eglise tres-belle & tres-riche, en l'honneur de la croix. Il n'y a point de langage qui puisse exprimer la diversité ni l'excellence des ornemens, dont il honora ce monument de la victoire remportée par le Sauveur sur la mort. Il choisit outre cela trois cavernes, qui avoient été honorées par l'accomplissement des plus grands mystéres, pour y construire trois autres Eglises. La premiére est celle où le Sauveur parut sur la terre, revêtu d'un corps mortel. La seconde est celle d'où il disparut en

en montant au Ciel, & la troisiéme celle où il donna des combats, & remporta des victoires. En honorant ces trois lieux par la dédicace de la consécration de trois Eglises, il a excité tous les peuples à reconnoître & à révérer le signe de la rédemption. Il trouve aussi dans les honneurs qu'il rend à ce glorieux trophée la récompense de sa vertu, l'aggrandissement de sa famille, l'affermissement de son trône, la prolongation de son régne, la promesse & l'assurance d'une heureuse postérité, & d'une longue suite de décendans. La grandeur de la puissance du Dieu que nôtre Empereur adore paroît dans la souveraine équité avec laquelle il distribuë les châtimens, & les récompenses. L'impiété de ceux qui ont démoli les Eglises a été suivie d'un promt châtiment. Ils sont morts sans enfans, sans postérité, sans successeurs. Mais nôtre Empereur qui laisse par toute la terre des marques de son affection, & de son zele au service du souverain maître de l'Univers, qui éléve des temples en son honneur, & qui pare ces temples avec tous les ornemens de la nature & de l'art, qui le montre & le prêche à tous les peuples, est visiblement favorisé de sa protection.

Chap. 10. Voila comment la puissance de nôtre Dieu a été manifestée par le signe salutaire de la Rédemption. Ceux qui sont instruits des mystéres de nôtre Religion savent, combien on peut dire de choses sur ce sujet. Ce que l'on peut dire de cét Etendart de nôtre salut est en effet merveilleux, & ce que l'on en peut penser l'est encore plus. Dés qu'il a paru sur la terre, il a découvert la fausseté de ce que l'on avoit publié depuis plusieurs siécles touchant la nature des Dieux. Il a enseveli l'erreur dans l'oubli, & dans les ténébres Il a éclairé les esprits raisonnables par une lumiére spirituelle en leur montrant le vrai Dieu. Il n'y a personne qui ne

ne change de sentiment, & qui ne méprise les idoles, qui ne foule aux piés les cérémonies impies des démons, qui ne se moque de l'erreur & de l'aveuglement de ses ancêtres. On court en foule à des Ecoles publiques, où l'on enseigne les préceptes de la foi. On ne regarde plus des créatures corporelles avec une crainte religieuse. On ne léve plus les yeux au Ciel pour y voir avec étonnement le Soleil, la Lune, & les Astres. On porte les yeux de l'esprit jusques à celui qui est au dessus du Ciel, & qui ne peut étre vû par les sens, on le reconnoît pour l'Auteur de l'Univers, & on confesse qu'il mérite seul les hommages, & les adorations des hommes. Ce merveilleux signe nous a produit tous ces avantages. Il nous a délivré des maux que nous souffrions, & nous a procuré les biens dont nous étions privez. La tempérance, & la piété sont prêchées à toutes les Nations, & l'Empereur s'aquite lui-même de ce ministére. Il éléve sa voix comme l'interpréte ou comme le héraut du souverain Seigneur du monde, pour exhorter tous ses sujets à le reconnoître, & à l'adorer. On ne voit plus comme autrefois des impies célébrer dans son Palais les mystéres de l'ancienne superstition. On n'y voit que des Evêques, & des Prêtres qui y chantent les loüanges de Dieu. Le nom de ce Dieu qui a seul créé l'Univers est annoncé à tous les peuples, & l'Evangile par lequel il promet de leur étre favorable se repand par toute la terre. Les hommes mêlent leur voix à celle des Anges pour l'honorer, & se servent de leur corps comme d'un instrument de musique pour former un concert à sa loüange. Les nations d'Occident reçoivent sa doctrine avec le même zele que celles d'Orient. Le Septentrion s'accorde parfaitement avec le Midi pour se soûmettre à ses loix, pour célébrer sa grandeur, pour confesser le nom du Sauveur son Fils unique, & pour témoigner

moigner la joie qu'il a de relever de la puissance de nôtre Empereur, & des Princes ses enfans. Cét Empereur tient le gouvernail de l'Etat, comme un habile Pilote, & conduit heureusement son vaisseau au port, à la faveur du vent qui le pousse. Le souverain des Empereurs lui tend la main du haut du Ciel, lui donne la victoire sur ses ennemis, étend la durée de son régne, lui promet pour l'autre vie, des faveurs plus solides que celles de la vie presente, & lui donne des gages de ses promesses. Il faut attendre un autre tems pour parler de ces promesses parce que ni les yeux, ni les oreilles du corps ne peuvent sentir les dons de Dieu.

Chap. II. Permettez-moi maintenant, victorieux Empereur, de vous expliquer les mystéres de Dieu dans ce discours que j'ai consacré à sa gloire. Ce n'est pas que j'aie la présomption de vous instruire, parce que je sai que Dieu même vous a instruit. Je n'entreprens pas de vous enseigner des véritez qui vous ont été révélées non par des hommes, ni par un homme, mais par le Sauveur commun de tous les hommes qui vous est souvent apparu. J'ai seulement dessein de presenter la lumiére à ceux qui sont dans les ténébres, de montrer les rares effets de vôtre piété à ceux qui n'en ont point de connoissance. Il n'y a personne qui ne sache les grandes entreprises que vous avez heureusement exécutées pour le service de Dieu dans toute l'étenduë de l'Univers. Mais tout le monde n'est pas informé de la magnificence des monumens que vôtre reconnoissance a élevez en l'honneur du Sauveur dans nôtre païs, & au milieu de la Ville d'où les ruisseaux de la foi ont commencé à couler pour arroser toute la terre. Plusieurs ignorent la piété des motifs qui vous ont porté à ériger des trophées pour conserver la mémoire des victoires remportées par le Fils de Dieu sur la mort.

mort. Ceux qui sont éclairez des lumiéres de l'Esprit saint ne sauroient se lasser d'admirer & de loüer la ferveur de vôtre zele. Mais ceux qui n'ont aucun goût des choses de Dieu, se moquent de vos desseins & s'étonnent qu'un aussi grand Prince que vous se soit abbaissé jusques à orner, & embellir des tombeaux qui semblent n'être destinez qu'à renfermer une corruption qui fait horreur à la nature. Ne seroit-il pas plus à propos, disent-ils, d'observer religieusement les anciennes coûtumes, & de révérer les Dieux & les demi-Dieux qui ont été reconnus dans chaque Province depuis une longue suite d'années? N'est-il pas injuste de les mépriser soûs prétexte qu'ils sont sujets à des foiblesses, & à des miséres? Ces foiblesses-là doivent exciter à les honorer aussi bien que celui que l'on honore soûs le nom de Fils de Dieu; ou si l'on persiste à les rejetter, il le faut rejetter aussi bien qu'eux. Voila ce que quelqu'un d'entre ceux dont je parle, dira en fronçant les sourcils, & en affectant par une vanité qui n'est fondée que sur des paroles, de paroître beaucoup plus éclairé que les autres. Cependant le Verbe du Pere de la miséricorde a la bonté de lui pardonner son ignorance, de la pardonner aussi à tous les autres qui s'éloignent comme celui-là, du chemin de la vérité, d'inviter les Grecs & les Barbares, les savans & les ignorans, les riches & les pauvres, les maîtres & les esclaves, les princes & les sujets, enfin les plus injustes, les plus impies, & les plus criminels à entrer dans les écoles qu'il a établies aux Villes & à la Campagne, aux lieux les plus fréquentez, & aux lieux les plus deserts, & d'y écouter les divins enseignemens de la sience du salut. Il y a déja long-tems qu'il promet à tous les hommes d'oublier leurs crimes, & qu'il leur crie à haute voix, *Venez à moi vous tous qui étes travaillez, & qui étes chargez, & je vous soûlagerai.* S. Math. ch. 11.

gerai. Ce sont les pécheurs, & non pas les justes que je suis venu appeler à la pénitence. Il en rend la raison quand il ajoûte, *Ce ne sont pas les sains, mais les malades qui ont besoin de Médecin.* Il dit
Ezec. c. 18. en un autre endroit, *Je ne souhaite pas la mort du pécheur, mais je souhaite sa pénitence.*

Voila pourquoi il n'y a que ceux qui ont été appelez à nôtre sainte Religion, & qui en ont appris les divins mystéres, qui puissent juger sainement de l'application avec laquelle l'Empereur a travaillé aux ouvrages dont je parle, & reconnoître que ce n'a été que par l'inspiration de Dieu, qu'il tient à honneur de servir, qu'il a entrepris, & achevé ces édifices. J'explique d'autant plus volontiers, très-religieux Empereur, l'intention par laquelle vous-vous étes porté à ces actions de piété, que je suis persuadé que vous n'aurez pas desagréable que je sois l'interpréte de vos pensées. Je publierai donc ce que personne ne doit ignorer. Je representerai la grandeur de la puissance de nôtre Sauveur qui étant plus ancien que le monde, & qui l'aiant toûjours gouverné depuis qu'il l'a tiré du néant n'a parû que depuis peu de tems parmi nous. Je dirai les raisons pour lesquelles il a bien voulu se revêtir d'un corps mortel, & se soûmettre à la rigueur de la mort; je dirai aussi ce qui l'a obligé à sortir du tombeau, & à triompher de la corruption, & je n'avancerai rien touchant ces mystéres si sublimes, que je n'appuie sur des preuves convainquantes. Commençons:

Ceux qui rendent aux créatures le culte qui n'est dû qu'au Créateur, & qui déférent des honneurs divins au Soleil, à la Lune, aux Astres, au feu, à l'air, à la terre, à la mer & aux élémens qui n'ont reçu l'étre que par un effet de la puissance du Verbe, ressemblent à ceux qui admirent l'architecture, la sculpture, la peinture, & les autres ornemens d'un Palais, qui regardent avec étonnement

nement ces merveilles de l'art, & qui ne conçoivent aucune estime, ni ne forment aucune pensée qui soit avantageuse à la réputation de l'Architecte & des ouvriers ausquels appartient toute la gloire de ces ouvrages. Ceux qui ne regarderoient qu'une lyre, & les sept cordes qui servent à en composer l'harmonie sans élever leur pensée jusques à celui qui a inventé un si bel instrument sembleroient aussi simples, & aussi ignorans que des enfans. Il faudroit mettre au même rang ceux qui au lieu de presenter des couronnes au Général aprés une victoire qu'il auroit remportée les presenteroient à un bouclier, ou à une lance; ou ceux qui au lieu de rendre les témoignages de leurs respects à un Prince qui auroit fondé une Ville, les rendroient à la Ville même, & aux pierres insensibles dont ses Temples, ses Palais, ses Colléges, ses Bains, & ses autres édifices publics seroient composez. Ainsi ceux qui voient le monde sensible, bien loin d'en attribuer la production au Soleil, à la Lune, ou à quelque cause qui soit soûs le Ciel, doivent avoüer qu'il est l'ouvrage de la sagesse éternelle, la regarder de l'œil de l'esprit, la révérer par préférance à toutes choses. Jamais personne n'a regardé la tête ou les yeux, les piez ou les mains d'un homme savant & habile avec les mêmes sentimens d'estime & de vénération, avec lesquels il a regardé son habileté & sa suffisance. Jamais il n'a admiré ses habits, ni ses meubles, comme s'ils avoient eu quelque part à sa sagesse. Ainsi nous admirons, & nous honorons au dessus de toutes les choses corporelles & visibles le Verbe invisible qui les a créées, & qui les gouverne. Le Pere qui l'a produit de soi-même, l'a établi en qualité de Prince, & de chef de l'Univers. La distance qui est entre la grandeur du Pere & les créatures sensibles ou raisonnables les empêche de s'approcher de lui. Comme il n'a point

Il y a en cét endroit des expressions

qui semblent conformes à l'erreur d'Arius.

point été engendré il posséde des perfections qui ne peuvent étre expliquées. Il demeure selon le témoignage de l'Ecriture au milieu d'une lumiére, à laquelle il n'y a nul accez. Voila pourquoi il a mis la puissance divine de son Fils entre lui, & les créatures. Elle est tres-proche de son Pere, elle habite au dedans de lui, & pénétre tous ses secrets. Et en même tems elle décend avec une bonté nonpareille jusques aux étres les plus éloignez de l'élévation, & de la majesté du Pere. Il n'y avoit point d'apparence de joindre le Pere à une matiére corruptible. Ainsi le Fils s'est mêlé avec le monde pour le gouverner par sa puissance Divine. Il est aisé de produire des preuves convainquantes de ce que j'avance. Si les principales parties de l'Univers, la terre, l'eau, l'air, & le feu que nous comprenons sous le nom d'élémens, & qui sont privées de raison, comme il est aisé de le reconnoître, en les regardant, n'ont qu'une matiére commune que ceux qui savent les secrets de la nature appelent le réceptacle, la mere, & la nourrice de tous les corps; si elles n'ont ni ame, ni connoissance, ni figure, ni beauté, d'où cette beauté leur est-elle venuë? Comment ces élémens se sont-ils séparez? Comment est-ce qu'aiant des qualitez si contraires ils ne laissent pas de s'accorder, & de concourir à l'ornement du monde? Qui est-ce qui a commandé que la fluidité de l'eau soutînt la pésanteur de la terre? Qui est-ce qui a renfermé dans les nuës qui sont au haut de l'air, des eaux qui d'elles-mêmes décendent toûjours & tendent vers les lieux les plus bas? Qui est-ce qui a attaché le feu au bois, & aux autres matiéres qui semblent étre d'une nature toute opposée à la sienne? Qui est-ce qui a accordé la chaleur, avec la froideur de l'air? Qui est-ce qui a inventé la multiplication par laquelle les hommes se conservent & se rendent en quel-

que

que sorte immortels, bien qu'ils soient sujets à la mort ? Qui est-ce qui a formé les deux séxes, & qui les a joints ensemble, pour n'en faire qu'un principe de la génération de leur espéce ? Qui est-ce qui a mis une source de vie dans les semences qui semblent ne procéder que de la corruption ? Qui est-ce qui a produit, & qui produit encore châque jour ces effets qui sont plus admirables qu'on ne les peut admirer ? Qui est-ce qui dispose à châque moment par une vertu invisible, le changement continuel qui renouvelle la nature ? Ces miracles si surprenans ne peuvent sans doute étre attribuez qu'à la puissance infinie du Verbe, qui s'étant mêlé dans toutes les parties de l'univers, & s'étant étendu en haut & en bas, d'une maniére spirituelle & invisible, les a rangées dans l'ordre où nous les voyons. Il s'est fait un instrument d'une merveilleuse harmonie, & a touché avec raison & sagesse la matiére qui d'elle-même n'a ni raison ni sagesse, ni forme, ni beauté. Il a disposé de telle sorte le soleil, la Lune, les étoiles & les autres astres qui brillent dans le Ciel, que leur lumiére, & leurs influences procurent de grandes commoditez au monde inférieur. Le même Verbe s'étant répandu sur la surface de la terre y a produit les espéces si différentes des plantes & des animaux, & étant aussi décendu jusques à la mer il a fait les poissons. Il forme les petis dans le sein des meres comme dans la boutique de la nature. Il éléve l'eau malgré sa pésanteur naturelle. Il l'adoucit dans les nuës comme dans un alambic. Il la verse aprés cela sur la terre, la distribuë par divers canaux comme un prudent Jardinier, & la mêle par un si juste tempérament avec la poussiére, qu'il en tire la diversité des couleurs qui émaillent les prairies, des odeurs qui nous récréent, & des fruits qui nous nourrissent. Mais pourquoi est-ce que j'entreprens d'expliquer la grandeur de la

puissance du Verbe, puisqu'elle est infiniment au dessus, non seulement de nos paroles, mais de nos pensées ? Quelques-uns l'ont appelé la Nature de l'Univers, d'autres l'Ame du monde, d'autres la destinée. D'autres ont assuré qu'il étoit un Dieu infiniment élevé au dessus de toutes ces choses. J'avouë que je ne comprens pas comment l'esprit humain a été capable de concevoir sur le même sujet des idées si opposées. Comment il a confondu des choses si éloignées les unes des autres. Comment il a mêlé avec la corruption de la matiére, une nature qui n'a point de commencement, comment il l'a placée comme au milieu entre les animaux qui ont la raison, & ceux qui ne l'ont point; entre les substances sujettes à la mort, & celles qui en sont exemtes.

Chap. 11. Voila les sentimens où ont esté les hommes dont je parle. Mais selon la doctrine qui nous a été révélée de Dieu, il faut tenir pour certain que le souverain bien qui est le principe de tous les biens est au dessus de nos pensées, & que nulle parole ne le peut exprimer. Il n'est renfermé dans aucun lieu. Il n'est reserré ni dans les corps terrestres, ni dans le Ciel, ni dans l'air. Il est hors de toutes ces choses, comme caché dans son propre sein. L'Ecriture nous enseigne qu'il doit être reconnu pour l'unique Dieu, dégagé de la matiére. C'est pourquoi, on dit que toutes choses ont été faites de lui, & non pas par lui. Il est comme un Empereur dans son Palais, au milieu d'une lumiére inaccessible, d'où il donne les ordres qu'il lui plait. Tout ce qui est produit, est produit parce qu'il le veut, & ce qui n'est pas produit, n'est pas produit, parce qu'il ne le veut pas. Il veut toûjours le bien, parcequ'il est le souverain bien, de soi-même. Le Verbe sortant du sein de son Pere, comme d'une source vaste & immense, se répand comme un large fleuve sur

toutes

toutes les créatures. L'esprit humain dont personne n'a jamais connu la substance, est comme un Prince au dedans de nous-mêmes, où il ordonne ce que nous devons faire. Ainsi le Verbe & le Fils unique de Dieu sort du sein de son Pere, où il a été engendré d'une maniére que nul ne peut exprimer, déclare ses pensées, & exécute ses desseins. L'usage de la parole est extrémement utile aux hommes. Cette parole frappe les oreilles, mais l'esprit qui la produit, ne peut étre vû. La tres-parfaite parole de Dieu, qui est le souverain Seigneur de l'Univers, n'est point formée par le mouvement des lévres, & par l'agitation de l'air. Elle ne consiste point en syllabes, mais elle est vivante & efficace. Elle subsiste personnellement. Elle procéde de la Divinité & de la Roiauté du Pere, & elle est sa puissance & sa sagesse. Elle est la bonne production d'un bon Pere. Elle conserve généralement toutes les créatures, se répand au milieu de toutes, les éclaire par sa lumiére, les conduit par sa raison, les anime par sa vie, & se communique non seulement à celles qui sont proches, mais à celles qui sont éloignées: non seulement à celles qui sont séparées de nous, par la vaste étenduë des terres & des mers, mais aussi à celles qui sont dans une autre sphére que celle que nous habitons. Il leur a assigné à toutes des places, prescrit des bornes, & imposé des loix avec une parfaite équité, & une souveraine puissance. Il a mis les unes au dessus du Ciel, les autres dans l'air, & les autres sur la terre. Il transfére quelquefois les hommes d'un lieu à un autre, examine leurs actions & les punit ou les récompense avec une tres-exacte justice. Il fournit des vivres en abondance & aux hommes, & aux animaux qui servent à l'usage des hommes; Il n'accorde à ceux-ci que la joüissance d'une vie fort courte, au lieu qu'il communique aux autres l'imortalité.

Enfin il exécute & consomme tout comme le Verbe Eternel & infini. Il est present en tous lieux par son immensité, & se répand par son opération continuelle dans toutes les parties de l'Univers. Il a les yeux fixement arrêtez sur son Pere pour recevoir les ordres par lesquels il gouverne les créatures inférieures qui ont été produites depuis lui. Il est comme le milieu entre les substances qui ont eu un commencement, & le Pere qui n'a point été engendré. Il est le nœud qui unit ces deux termes si éloignez, & qui empêche qu'ils ne se séparent. Il est la providence qui veille sur tout, & qui a soin de tout. Il est la puissance & la sagesse de Dieu. Il est le Fils unique de Dieu, & le Verbe qui procéde de Dieu. *Au commencement étoit le Verbe, & le Verbe étoit en Dieu, & le Verbe étoit Dieu. Toutes choses ont été faites par lui, & rien n'a été fait sans lui.* Comme disent les Théologiens. Il est comme le jardinier qui arrose toute la nature, & qui renouvelle sans cesse sa beauté & sa vigueur. Il est le Pilote qui tient en main le timon du monde, & qui conduit ce vaste vaisseau selon l'intention & le commandement de son Pere. Dieu le Pere dont la grandeur & la bonté sont infinies, l'a engendré de sa propre substance comme un excellent Fils, & l'a donné au monde comme un riche present. Il l'a répandu comme une ame dans les corps qui n'avoient point d'ame, & l'a communiqué comme une raison aux esprits qui n'avoient pas la raison. Nous devons le regarder dans la matiére & dans les élémens, comme le principe de la génération des animaux, & le considérer dans les substances spirituelles, comme la lumiére qui les éclaire en qualité de terme d'un entendement infini. Bien qu'il soit unique parcequ'il procéde d'un Pere unique, il ne laisse pas d'avoir plusieurs facultez & plusieurs puissances. Le monde est composé de plusieurs parties,

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mais

mais il ne faut pas s'imaginer pour cela, qu'il soit sorti de plusieurs principes. Il y a une diversité prodigieuse de créatures. Il ne faut pas pour cela admettre la pluralité des Dieux. Ceux qui ont adoré plusieurs Dieux, sont tombez dans une erreur tres-grossiére comme des enfans qui n'ont que l'ignorance, & l'indiscrétion en partage, quand ils ont mis certaines parties du monde au rang des Dieux, & que du monde qui est unique, ils en ont voulu faire plusieurs. Si quelqu'un ne regardant dans l'homme que les yeux, disoit qu'ils sont l'homme, ou si ne regardant que les oreilles ou la tête, ou l'estomach, les piés, les mains, & les autres membres, il en disoit la même chose, ou enfin si considérant séparément les facultez sensitives, il divisoit un homme & en faisoit plusieurs, il est certain qu'il se rendroit ridicule. Ceux-là ne le sont pas moins, qui de plusieurs parties du Monde font plusieurs Dieux, ou qui croient que le Monde qui a été créé, & qui est composé de plusieurs parties, est un Dieu, & qui ne sauroient comprendre qu'il est impossible que la Nature Divine ait des parties. Si elle étoit composée de parties, elle auroit un principe de composition: & si elle avoit un principe de composition, elle ne conserveroit plus l'indépendance ni la perfection d'une Nature Divine. Aiant des parties inégales, elle en auroit de plus parfaites & de moins parfaites. La Nature Divine est donc simple & indivisible, également exemte de composition & de division, & infiniment élevée au dessus des objets qui tombent sous nos sens. Voila pourquoi le Héraut de la vérité crie à haute voix, que le Verbe de Dieu est avant toutes choses, & qu'il conserve seul toutes les créatures raisonnables. Le Pere étant le Principe de toute génération, l'Auteur de tous les étres, est appelé proprement le Pere de son Verbe unique. Il n'y a

qu'un Dieu, & qu'un ſeul Fils, & un ſeul Verbe de Dieu, qui ſe répand dans toutes les parties de l'Univers & qui les conſerve. Le monde ſenſible eſt comme un inſtrument de Muſique. Les parties qui le compoſent, & qui ont des qualitez ſi différentes, la chaleur, la froideur, l'humidité, la ſécheresſe, ſont comme les cordes dont les unes ſont fort bandées, & les autres ſont fort lâches, dont les unes ont un ſon aigu, & les autres ont un ſon grave, & qui toutes enſemble forment une juſte harmonie & un agréable concert en l'honneur du Créateur. Un corps n'eſt animé que d'un eſprit, bien qu'il ſoit formé de pluſieurs membres ; de même le Monde n'eſt gouverné que par le Verbe, bien qu'il ſoit compoſé de diverſes parties, & ce Verbe ſe communique & ſe fait ſentir en toutes ces parties par ſa vertu toute-puiſſante. Ne voiez-vous pas quelle eſt la diſpoſition de ce vaſte Univers ? Ne vous appercevez-vous pas de la multitude des Etoiles qui ſont attachées au Firmament, & du nombre innombrable des Aſtres dont le Soleil efface la ſplendeur ? Ainſi il n'y a qu'un Pere, & qu'un Verbe. Un excellent terme d'un excellent principe. Que ſi quelqu'un ſe plaind de ce qu'il n'y a qu'un Pere, & un Verbe, il ſe pourra plaindre avec autant de raiſon, de ce qu'il n'y a qu'un Soleil, une Lune, & un Monde, & il entreprendra (s'il veut) avec la derniére extravagance, de renverſer l'ordre qui a été le plus ſagement établi dans la Nature. Le Verbe Divin éclaire par une lumiére intérieure toutes les ſubſtances intelligentes & raiſonnables, comme le Soleil éclaire d'une lumiére extérieure le monde ſenſible. Bien que l'ame de l'homme ſoit unique, elle ne laiſſe pas de produire quantité d'effets fort différens. Elle donne des préceptes & pour cultiver la Terre, & pour naviger les Mers : pour bâtir, & des maiſons, & des Vaiſſeaux. Elle renferme un grand

grand nombre de disciplines & de siences. Elle fait l'Astronomie, la Géometrie, la Grammaire, la Rhétorique, la Médecine. Elle invente les Arts qui conduisent les ouvrages des mains. Personne ne s'avise pour cela d'assurer que le même corps est animé de plusieurs ames. Supposons que quelqu'un aiant trouvé du limon, l'a manié, & en a fait l'image d'un homme, avec une tête, des yeux, des oreilles, un nez, un estomach, des bras, des jambes, des piés, & des mains. Bien que cette image eût divers membres de diverses figures, on ne diroit pas qu'elle auroit été faite par divers ouvriers. Il faut faire le même jugement de l'Univers, qui est seul & unique, bien qu'il soit composé de plusieurs parties. Il ne faut pas s'imaginer qu'il ait été produit par plusieurs puissances, ni par plusieurs dieux; mais reconnoître au contraire, que la seule sagesse & la seule puissance de Dieu qui est tres-excellente & tres-parfaite, se répand dans toutes les parties de la Nature, & leur communique tout ce qu'elles ont d'avantageux. Le même raion du Soleil illumine l'air, éclaire les yeux, échauffe tout le corps, rend la terre féconde, meurit les fruits, parcourt le Ciel, modére le mouvement des Astres, régle le tems & les saisons, & découvre la grandeur de la puissance Divine. Le feu purifie l'or, fond le plomb, amollit la cire, endurcit la boué, & brûle le bois. Ainsi le Verbe Divin produit des effets fort différens dans toutes les parties de la Nature. Il les remplit par son immensité; il les pénétre par sa subtilité, il les gouverne par son opération. Il communique de sa lumiére au Soleil, à la Lune, & aux Astres. Il régle perpétuellement le mouvement de la vaste machine du Ciel, qu'il a formée afin qu'elle fût une des plus fidéles images de sa grandeur & de sa gloire. Il a accordé des perfections fort éminen-

tes aux Puissances qui sont au-dessus du Ciel, aux purs Esprits; aux substances intelligentes & raisonnables, & les a enrichiés par la participation de sa beauté, & de sa bonté, de sa lumiére, de sa vie, de sa sagesse, & de sa force. Enfin il conserve l'Univers, il maintient les Elémens, il compose les corps naturels; il distingue les espéces, les formes, & les figures des plantes, des arbres, & des animaux, & fait voir que l'harmonie merveilleuse du Monde est son ouvrage.

Chap. 13. Je croi devoir expliquer maintenant les raisons qui ont excité ce Verbe Divin à décendre sur la Terre. Les hommes ne l'aiant point connu, bien qu'il soit sorti du sein de son Pere, comme d'une source inépuisable pour soûtenir le monde par sa présence, & pour y donner des preuves continuelles de sa Providence & de sa bonté; ils sont tombez dans un si étrange aveuglement, & dans une si déplorable extravagance, que de donner le nom de dieux au Soleil, & à la Lune, au Ciel, & aux Astres. Ils se sont abbaissez jusques à rendre un souverain culte à la Terre, & aux fruits qu'elle produit; & c'est de-là que sont venus les noms & les statuës de Cerés, de Proserpine, & de Bacchus. Leur superstition a été encore plus loin. Ils ont révéré leurs pensées & leurs paroles. Ils ont donné à l'esprit le nom de Minerve; au discours celui de Mercure; aux facultez par lesquelles on apprend les disciplines & les siences, celui de Monnoie & de Muses. En chérissant de jour en jour sur leur impiété, ils ont consacré leurs passions au lieu de les réprimer, & ont honoré soûs le nom de Cupidon, de Priape, & de Venus, les mouvemens les plus déréglez & les plus infames, par lesquels la concupiscence nous porte au plaisir. Ils ont placé des hommes dans le Ciel aprés leur mort, & les ont mis au rang des Héros & des Dieux. Leur folie ne s'est pas terminée à ce point,

ils ont adoré diverses sortes d'animaux, & entre autres les serpens les plus vénimeux. Ils ont coupé les arbres dans les forêts, tiré les pierres des carriéres, fondu les métaux pour faire des statuës d'hommes, de femmes, de bêtes, & pour leur rendre en suite des honneurs divins. Ils ont déféré le titre de dieux à des esprits impurs qui s'étoient cachez dans ces statuës, & qui y recevoient avec joie de l'encens & des sacrifices. Ils ont tâché de se rendre propices, par des enchantemens & par d'abominables cérémonies, ces puissances invisibles qui volent dans l'air. Il faut néanmoins avoüer qu'ils n'ont pû s'accorder dans le choix des hommes, ausquels ils ont attribué la Divinité. Les Grecs ont préféré Bacchus, Hercule, Esculape, Apollon. Les Egyptiens ont reconnu Herus, Isis, & Osiris; & quoi qu'ils se vantent d'avoir inventé la Géometrie, l'Astronomie & l'Arithmétique, ils n'ont pû appercevoir la distance qu'il y a entre la bassesse de l'homme & l'élévation de Dieu, & ont respecté les plus sales & les plus méprisables espéces des animaux, les plus dangereuses & les plus terribles, comme si elles avoient eu quelque chose de Divin. Les Phéniciens ont dressé des Autels à Melcatare, à Usore, & à quelques autres hommes encore moins considérables. Les Arabes en ont dressé à Dusare & à Obodas. Les Gétes à Zamolxis, les Ciliciens à Mopsius, les Thébains à Amphiaraüs, & d'autres peuples à d'autres qui n'avoient rien au dessus de nôtre nature. Les Egyptiens, les Phéniciens, les Grecs, & presque toutes les Nations qui sont éclairées des raions du Soleil, sont convenuës de rendre un culte religieux aux élémens & aux biens que la terre produit pour nôtre usage ou pour nôtre plaisir. Et ce qui est plus surprenant, quoi qu'ils avoüent que ces dieux-la se sont soüillez de toutes sortes de débauches, qu'ils ont enlevé des

femmes, & commis avec elles des adultéres; ils n'ont pas laissé de remplir les Villes & la Campagne de leurs statuës, & de leurs Temples, & d'imiter leurs débordemens. On les entend souvent, qui en parlant des enfans de leurs dieux, les appellent des Héros, & d'heureux Génies. Mais si l'on examine ces termes, on trouvera qu'ils sont diversement opposez à la vérité. Ils ressemblent à peu prés à ceux qui voulant montrer à d'autres le Soleil & les Astres, abbaisseroient leurs yeux & leurs mains vers la terre. Ainsi les hommes trompez par leur propre malice, & par l'artifice des démons, se sont faussement persuadez que la Nature divine, qui est infiniment plus élevée que le Ciel, consiste dans des corps sujets à la naissance & à la mort, & à un grand nombre d'autres foiblesses & d'autres miséres. Ils sont montez à cét excez d'extravagance, que de leur sacrifier leurs enfans, & d'égorger aux piés de leurs statuës un fils unique qui leur étoit fort cher. Quelle plus étrange fureur, que d'immoler des hommes, que de soüiller sa Ville & sa maison du sang de ses proches? Les Grecs ne fournissent-ils pas des exemples de cette monstrueuse impiété, & leur Histoire n'en est-elle pas remplie? Les Phéniciens sacrifioient tous les ans à Saturne les enfans qui leur étoient d'autant plus chers, qu'ils étoient uniques. Les habitans de l'Isle de Rodes sacrifioient des hommes au même dieu, le sixiéme jour du mois Métagitnion. C'étoit autrefois une coûtume à Salamine, qu'un homme tournoit trois fois autour de l'Autel de Minerve & de Dioméde, pendant que les autres le poursuivoient, que le Prêtre lui enfonçoit ensuite une lance dans l'estomach, & le brûloit sur un bucher. Il n'y avoit rien de si commun en Egypte que ces cruels sacrifices. On immoloit autrefois trois hommes chaque jour à Junon dans la Ville d'Héliopole. Le Roi

Roi Amosis détestant avec raison une si inhumaine coûtume, ordonna que l'on immoleroit trois hommes de cire, au lieu d'en immoler de véritables. Dans l'Isle de Chio, & dans celle de Ténéde, on sacrifioit un homme à Bacchus. A Lacédémone on en sacrifioit un à Mars. En Créte on en sacrifioit un à Saturne. A Laodicée Ville de Syrie, on sacrifioit tous les ans une fille à Minerve, maintenant on ne lui sacrifie plus qu'une Biche. Les habitans d'Afrique & de Carthage répandent aussi le sang des hommes, pour se rendre les dieux favorables. Les Dumaténiens peuples d'Arabie, avoient accoûtumé d'égorger tous les ans un enfant, & de l'enterrer soûs l'Autel. L'Histoire fait foi que les Grecs ne partoient jamais de leur païs pour aller à la guerre, qu'auparavant ils n'eussent immolé un homme. On dit que les Thraces & les Scythes observoient la même coûtume. Les Athéniens témoignent eux-mêmes, que les filles de Lée, & la fille d'Eryctée, ont été sacrifiées parmi eux. Chacun sait que l'on immole encore aujourd'hui à Rome un homme le jour de la fête du Jupiter du Latium. Les plus célébres d'entre les Philosophes ont confirmé par leur témoignage la vérité de ce que j'avance. Diodore qui a fait un abrégé des Bibliothéques, rapporte que les Afriquains immolérent à Saturne deux cens jeunes hommes des meilleures familles, & que les peres en offrirent jusques à trois cens autres pour étre immolez. Denys l'un des plus fameux écrivains de l'Histoire Romaine, assure que Jupiter & Apollon demandérent aux peuples qui habitoient autrefois au lieu où Rome a été depuis fondée, & que l'on appelloit Aboriginés, qu'ils sacrifiassent des hommes; que ces peuples n'aiant offert que les premiers de leurs fruits, ils furent accablez de toutes sortes de calamitez, qui ne cessérent qu'aprés qu'ils se furent dé-

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cimez. Cette décimation désola extrémement le païs. Voila une fidéle image des malheurs soûs la pésanteur desquels les hommes gémissoient en ce tems-là. Toutes les Nations étoient agitées par le démon, & ébranlées pas des séditions si furieuses, qu'elles ne conservoient plus entre elles aucune société. Elles étoient tellement aigries les unes contre les autres, qu'elles ne quittoient point les armes. Les laboureurs les retenoient en cultivant la terre, & avoient un plus grand soin d'en achêter, que d'achêter les instrumens qui servent à l'agriculture. Ils croioient que c'étoit une fort belle action que d'enlever le bien d'autrui, & de charger de chaînes des personnes libres. Les Fables qu'ils avoient inventées touchant les débauches de leurs dieux, ont autorisé leur licence. Ils ont violé toutes les loix de la Nature, & l'ont outragée par les plus monstrueuses abominations. Les hommes rejettant l'alliance des deux séxes qui est selon la Nature, ont été embrasez d'un desir brutal les uns envers les autres, & ont ainsi reçu en eux-mêmes la juste peine qui étoit duë à leur erreur & à leur impiété, comme parle l'Ecriture. Ils ont nié la Providence, & ont attribué au hazard, à la nécessité, & à la destinée, la production & le gouvernement de l'Univers. S'étant persüadez que la fin de leur corps seroit aussi celle de leur ame, ils ont mené une vie semblable à celle des bêtes, sans attendre le Jugement de Dieu, sans espérer de récompense, sans appréhender de châtiment. Des peuples entiers ont été sujets à une effroiable corruption. Quelques-uns ont commis des incestes avec leurs meres, d'autres avec leurs sœurs, & d'autres avec leurs filles: Quelques-uns ont coupé la tête aux étrangers qui arrivoient en leur païs. Quelques-uns ont mangé des hommes, & il s'en est trouvé qui ont étranglé leurs peres lors qu'ils étoient dans une extré-

Ep. aux Rom. ch. 1.

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me vieillesse, & qui les ont en suite mangez. D'autres au lieu de les tuër pour les manger, les ont exposez tous vivans aux chiens. Je n'ai pas assez de loisir pour décrire tous les symptômes de la funeste maladie qui s'étoit alors emparée du genre humain. Je me contente de dire qu'il étoit tourmenté par un grand nombre de semblables maux qui donnérent au Verbe de Dieu des sentimens de tendresse & de compassion pour des sujets, quoi que rebelles, & le portérent à susciter premiérement des Prophétes, & ensuite des hommes éminens en sainteté & en vertu, qui posérent les fondemens de la véritable Religion. Mais comme le genre humain étoit engagé en des erreurs déplorables, & exposé à la fureur non des bêtes cruelles, mais des démons qui ne respiroient que sa ruine; le Verbe jugea que de si extrémes maux avoient besoin d'un secours tout puissant, & suivant les intentions de son Pere, décendit sur la terre. J'ai déja expliqué les motifs de son avénement. Il n'a pas agi conformément à la majesté de sa Nature divine, quand il s'est rendu visible, & qu'il a conversé familiérement avec nous. Auparavant n'aiant point de corps, il étoit par son immensité dans le Ciel & sur la terre, & y faisoit éclater par ses œuvres la grandeur de sa puissance. Il a pris depuis une méthode toute extraordinaire. Il s'est revêtu d'un corps pour conférer avec des hommes corporels, à dessein de les sauver. Je m'arrêterai un peu en cét endroit, pour exposer les raisons de ce Mystére, & pour déduire les motifs qui ont porté le Verbe invisible à se rendre visible.

La Nature Divine qui étant spirituelle ne peut tomber sous les sens, pouvoit-elle se manifester aux hommes d'une autre maniére, qu'en prenant un corps sensible & palpable? Il n'y avoit point de moien plus convenable de s'accommoder à nô- Chap. 14.
tre

tre foiblesse. Il faloit se rendre semblable à nous pour converser avec nous, puisqu'il n'y a rien qui nous plaise si fort, que ce qui nous est semblable. Le Verbe s'est montré d'une maniére grossiére & sensible à des hommes charnels, qui ne se conduisoient que par les sens, & qui cherchoient la Divinité dans des Corps, dans des statuës insensibles, & dans les ouvrages de leurs mains. Le Verbe Divin s'est fait un corps comme un instrument dont il se vouloit servir pour accomplir l'ouvrage de nôtre Redemption, comme un Temple qu'il vouloit consacrer à la gloire de son Pere, comme un Palais où il desiroit loger la Sagesse, comme une Statuë vivante, & infiniment plus excellente que celles que les Paiens ont adorées. Celles-ci n'étant que d'une matiére insensible, de cuivre, de fer, d'or, d'yvoire, de bois, de pierres, & n'étant taillées ou jettées en moule que par des hommes qui n'ont que la foiblesse & la misére en partage; elles sont fort propres à servir de retraite à des esprits aussi impurs, & aussi infames que sont les démons. Cette Statuë qui a été faite par la Sagesse Divine est pleine de vie & d'esprit, elle renferme toutes les vertus & Dieu-même. Le Verbe l'aiant choisie comme un Instrument par lequel il pouvoit se communiquer aux hommes, il ne s'est pas assujetti à toutes les imperfections de leur nature. Il ne s'est pas renfermé dans son Corps, de la même sorte que les ames des hommes sont renfermées dans les corps qu'elles animent. Il n'a rien perdu de sa grandeur en se faisant homme. Sa Nature Divine est demeurée Spirituelle & impassible quand il s'est joint à la Nature humaine, de la même sorte que le raion du Soleil demeure pur & incorruptible, quand il touche la bouë, & la corruption. Le Sauveur commun de tous les hommes a répandu de la sorte ses graces, & a procuré le salut de la Nature corrompuë par le péché. Il s'est

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servi de son Corps pour opérer ces guérisons miraculeuses, comme un Musicien se sert de sa lyre pour faire paroître l'excellence de son art. Les Grecs rapportent dans leurs fables, qu'Orphée adoucit autrefois par ses chansons les bêtes les plus farouches. On dit communément parmi eux, qu'un Instrument inanimé eut la force de changer le naturel des animaux, & de transporter les arbres d'un lieu à un autre, & le peuple est assez simple pour croire des contes si incroiables. Le Verbe de Dieu qui fait une musique & une harmonie infiniment plus excellente, aiant resolu d'apporter un remède salutaire aux maladies de l'homme, quelqu'impliquées qu'elles fussent, prit en main un Instrument que sa Sagesse avoit inventé, un Corps & une Ame, & touchant cét Instrument avec une adresse nompareille, il enchanta non les bêtes, mais les hommes, apprivoisa les Grecs & les Barbares, & domta leurs passions. Comme ils étoient malades d'une vieille maladie qui leur faisoit chercher la Divinité en des Natures corporelles & sensibles, il les guérit par un remède specifique, en leur montrant le vrai Dieu dans un homme. N'aiant pas moins de charité pour les corps que pour les ames, il opéra des guérisons miraculeuses. Il enseigna une doctrine celeste, & fit par le moien de l'humanité à laquelle il s'étoit uni, tout ce qui étoit nécessaire pour prouver la Divinité. Il accomplit ces Mystéres suivant la volonté & l'intention de son Pere, demeurant toûjours immatériel & incorporel, comme il étoit auparavant, sans souffrir aucun changement dans sa substance, sans rien perdre de l'excellence de sa Nature Divine, sans se renfermer dans l'étenduë du corps qu'il avoit pris volontairement. Car bien qu'il fût dans le Corps qu'il avoit pris pour converser avec les hommes, il remplissoit tout le monde par son immensité, il reposoit dans le sein de son Pere,

Pere, & prenoit soin de tout ce qui se passoit dans le Ciel & sur la Terre. Il n'étoit point renfermé, comme nous, dans un petit espace, & ne trouvoit aucun obstacle aux desseins de sa puissance. Il communiqua ses perfections à la Nature humaine, sans se charger de ses défauts Il ne contracta aucun péché en naissant, & ne souffrit aucune douleur en mourant. Quand la corde d'une lyre se romt, le Musicien qui la touche n'en sent aucun mal. Quand le corps d'un homme sage est exposé aux tourmens, la sagesse ou l'ame même qui est dans le corps n'est pas tourmentée. Elle n'est ni entamée par le fer, ni brulée par le feu. *S'il est permis de répéter l'exemple dont je me suis déja servi*, le Soleil ne se salit point quand il répand ses raions sur le fumier & sur la boüe. Ces sales matiéres reçoivent l'impression de la lumiére, sans lui rien laisser de leur infection. Quand le Verbe Divin qui est la vie essentielle, & une lumiére spirituelle, touche quelque chose, il la rend vivante & intelligente. Quand il touche un corps il le rend sain, & le délivre de toutes les indispositions qui pourroient altérer son tempérament. Il soûlage la disette des créatures, & subvient à leurs besoins. Voila pourquoi il a affecté pendant tout le cours de sa vie, de faire paroître qu'il avoit un corps sujet aux mêmes foiblesses & aux mêmes infirmitez que les nôtres, & de donner d'un autre côté des preuves convainquantes de sa Divinité par la grandeur de ses Miracles, par la clarté de ses Prophéties, par la force de sa Prédication, & par la maniére toute Divine dont il exhortoit ses auditeurs à se rendre dignes de la demeure qui est préparée dans le Ciel aux ames saintes.

Chap. 15. Que me reste-t-il maintenant, si ce n'est de rapporter les raisons de la principale & de la derniére action de sa vie, du genre de sa mort dont on parle tant, & du miracle de sa Résurrection; & d'ajoûter.

joûter les preuves certaines & convainquantes de ces Mystéres ? Le Verbe de Dieu aiant pris pour les raisons que nous avons dites, un Corps mortel comme un Instrument fort propre à l'accomplissement de ses desseins, il s'en est servi d'une maniére convenable à sa divine Puissance. Que si aprés avoir conversé visiblement avec les hommes, il étoit disparu tout d'un coup, & avoit dérobé son corps à la violence de ses persécuteurs, pour le laisser mourir dans un autre tems d'une mort naturelle, tout le monde l'auroit pris pour un phantôme. Il n'auroit pas lui-même accompli de cette sorte ce qu'il desiroit d'accomplir : car étant la puissance de Dieu, il auroit fait paroître de la foiblesse, & étant la vie, il auroit abandonné son corps à la mort. Il n'auroit pas terminé par un combat livré à la mort, les entreprises qu'il avoit faites contre le démon. On n'auroit point sû où il se seroit retiré, & ce que l'on en auroit pû dire n'auroit point trouvé de créance dans l'esprit de ceux qui n'en auroient point été témoins. Il ne seroit point constant qu'il eût un pouvoir absolu sur la mort, ni qu'il eût délivré la Nature humaine de sa tyrannie. Jamais sa doctrine n'auroit été reçuë par toute la terre. Jamais il n'auroit persuadé à ses Disciples de mépriser la mort, ni d'espérer une autre vie. Jamais il n'auroit accompli ni ses promesses ni les prédictions des Prophétes. Enfin jamais il n'auroit donné le dernier combat qu'il gagna contre la mort. Voila les raisons pour lesquelles, aprés qu'il a accompli par le ministere de son Corps, les desseins qu'il s'étoit proposez, il a permis qu'il ait été détruit de la maniére dont il l'a été. Il ne pouvoit terminer sa vie qu'en l'une de ces deux façons, ou en abandonnant entiérement son Corps à la mort & à la corruption, ou en le retirant du sein de la mort & de la corruption même, & en le rendant immortel & incorruptible.

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La premiére façon étoit contraire & à ses promesses, & à sa grandeur. Ce n'est point le propre de la vie de donner la mort, ni de la souveraine raison d'agir au hazard comme ce n'est point le propre du feu de rafraîchir, ni de la lumiére d'aveugler. Comment celui qui avoit promis l'immortalité à ses sectateurs, auroit-il livré à la mort l'Instrument de ses combats & de ses victoires? Il faloit donc qu'il terminât sa vie de l'autre façon. Mais la devoit-il terminer en cachette & comme à la dérobée, ou en public & à la vuë de tout le monde? Une action aussi importante que celle-là seroit demeurée inutile, si elle avoit été secréte; au lieu qu'elle devoit étre tres-utile étant publique. Il a eu donc raison de ne point éviter la mort, puisqu'en l'affrontant il a triomphé d'elle à la face de toute la Terre. S'il l'avoit évitée, il auroit fait paroître ou de la foiblesse ou de la crainte. Mais en la combatant, il a procuré l'immortalité à un Corps qui de sa Nature étoit mortel. Si quelqu'un vouloit faire voir qu'un vase a la force de résister à l'activité du feu, il faudroit qu'il le mit dans un brasier, & qu'aprés l'y avoir laissé quelque tems, il l'en retirât aussi entier qu'il l'y auroit mis. C'est ce que le Verbe Divin a fait quand il a voulu montrer que l'Instrument dont il s'étoit servi pour travailler au salut des hommes, étoit plus puissant que la mort. Il l'a abandonné pour un peu de tems, pour faire voir que de sa nature il étoit mortel, puis l'aiant retiré d'entre les mains de la mort, il l'a rendu immortel, & a montré que la vie qu'il promet est égale à l'Eternité. Il faloit que ses Disciples pour mépriser la mort, vissent un exemple de la Résurrection dans laquelle ils mettoient leur espérance. Que si ce gage & cette assurance de la vie future étoit nécessaire à tous ceux qui embrassoient sa doctrine, elle l'étoit encore plus à ceux qui la devoient publier, puis qu'ils devoient moins appré-

appréhender la mort que les autres, & s'exposer avec une courage intrépide aux violences des Idolatres. C'est pourquoi le Verbe ne s'est pas contenté de leur faire des discours touchant l'immortalité; il leur a montré les dépoüilles qu'il avoit remportées sur la mort, & les a convaincus par leurs propres yeux de cette vérité, que la mort qui paroît si formidable n'est rien. Il avoit encore une autre raison de ressusciter, pour faire éclater la puissance de la Nature Divine, qui avoit été comme cachée sous le voile de son humanité. Comme les hommes avoient consacré d'autres hommes aprés leur mort, & les avoient mis au rang des Héros & des Dieux, le Verbe de Dieu eut la bonté de les desabuser, en leur découvrant le pouvoir qu'il exerçoit sur la mort, & que nul autre que lui n'avoit jamais exercé. Voila pourquoi aprés que son corps eut subi cette loi, il lui rendit la vie, & le fit paroître comme un trophée, & comme un signe de sa victoire. Je pourrois rapporter une troisiéme raison pour laquelle le Verbe a bien voulu mourir. C'est qu'il étoit comme une victime offerte à Dieu pour la rédemption du genre humain, & l'extirpation de l'idolatrie. Depuis que cette victime tres-pure & tres-sainte eut été immolée au souverain Seigneur de l'Univers, au lieu de tous les hommes qui avoient mérité la mort par l'impiété du culte qu'ils avoient rendu aux démons, la puissance des esprits impurs a été détruite, & l'erreur abolie. C'est la victime qui a été choisie entre les hommes, & qui a été sacrifiée pour le salut de tous les hommes. C'est d'elle dont l'Ecriture parle, quand elle dit : *Voila l'Agneau de Dieu qui ôte les péchez du monde*. Et dans un autre endroit : *Il sera mené à la mort comme une brebi qu'on va égorger. Il demeurera dans le silence sans ouvrir la bouche, comme un agneau est muet devant celui qui le tond*. Elle en rend la raison quand elle ajoûte :

En S. Jean ch. 1. Isaïe ch. 53.

te : *Il a pris véritablement nos langueurs sur lui, & il s'est chargé lui-même de nos douleurs. Le châtiment qui nous devoit procurer la paix est tombé sur lui, & nous avons été guéris par ses meurtrissures. Nous-nous étions tous égarez comme des brebis errantes. Chacun s'étoit détourné pour suivre sa propre voie, & Dieu l'a chargé lui seul de l'iniquité de nous tous.*

Le Corps auquel le Verbe s'étoit uni, fut immolé comme une victime, pour les raisons que je viens de dire. Mais parce que ce Verbe étoit distingué de la victime, qu'il étoit le souverain Pontife, la parole de Dieu, la sagesse, & la puissance du Pere, il retira bien-tôt ce Corps d'entre les bras de la mort, & le remplit d'une vie nouvelle, comme les prémices de nôtre rédemption, comme des dépoüilles remportées sur le démon, comme une expiation des sacrileges commis contre lui par les peuples Idolatres.

Chap. 16. Il est tems maintenant de produire les preuves de ces véritez, si toute-fois des véritez aussi évidentes que celles-là, ont besoin de preuves. Je vous supplie de les écouter avec vôtre attention ordinaire. Les peuples étant autre-fois répandus en divers païs, & soûmis à différentes formes de gouvernement, entrérent en guerre ; & ruinérent le païs les uns des autres. C'est de-là que sont venus les évenemens si surprenans qui sont renfermez dans leurs Histoires, les enlévemens des femmes, & les adultéres, le siége & la ruine de Troie, & d'autres accidens tragiques, que l'on peut attribuer (sans se tromper) au culte de plusieurs Dieux. Mais depuis que l'Instrument de nôtre salut, que l'humanité du Sauveur dont la puissance surpassoit la malice du démon, & dont la sainteté étoit tres-éloignée de toute action & de toute parole infectée du moindre pêché, a été élevée comme un monument de la défaite des ennemis invisibles, & comme un rempart assuré contre leurs

leurs incursions, toutes leurs œuvres ont été dissipées. Les Etats dont le gouvernement étoit fort différent, ont été détruits au même tems, & on n'a plus vû de Toparchies, de Polycraties, de Monarchies, de Républiques, de Démocraties, ni de guerres, de désolations, ou de siéges, comme l'on en avoit vû pendant que châque peuple se conduisoit selon l'une de ces formes. L'unité de Dieu a été prêchée, la Majesté de l'Empire reconnuë, & la haine invétérée des Nations assoupie. La paix a été solidement établie sur la terre, dés que le vrai Dieu y a été adoré, que la doctrine du Sauveur y a été reçuë, & que l'Empire Romain a été gouverné par un seul Prince. L'autorité de l'Empire, & la sainteté de la Religion, ont été comme deux sources d'où Dieu a fait couler des fleuves de prospérité & de bon-heur. Avant ce tems-là chaque païs étoit soûs la domination de divers Seigneurs. La Syrie relevoit de la puissance d'un Prince, l'Asie de celle d'un autre, & la Macédoine d'un autre. L'Egypte avoit été usurpée par un Seigneur qui y commandoit avec un pouvoir absolu. L'Arabie avoit eu un sort tout pareil. La Palestine étoit réduite à l'obéïssance des Juifs. Les habitans de châque Ville & de châque Bourg étant comme transportez de fureur, & comme agitez par le démon, ne respiroient que les armes. Mais deux grandes puissances, l'Empire Romain, & la Religion Chrêtienne aiant paru en un même tems, ont appaisé la fureur de ces Nations; la doctrine du Sauveur a ruiné la Polycratie des démons, & la multitude des Dieux, en annonçant aux Grecs, aux Barbares, & aux Nations les plus reculées, la Monarchie du vrai Dieu. L'Empire Romain a réuni les peuples en les assujettissant, & d'ennemis qu'ils étoient les a rendus amis & alliez, en abolissant un grand nombre de petis Etats, dont les intérêts différens étoient une

source inépuisable de haines & d'inimitiez continuelles. Il a déja réconcilié en tres-peu de tems plusieurs peuples. Il embrassera bien-tôt les plus éloignez, & s'étendra jusqu'aux extrémitez de la terre à la faveur de la doctrine celeste de l'Evangile, qui rend l'exécution de toutes ses entreprises aisées. Quiconque considérera sans préoccupation de si grands événemens, avoüera qu'ils sont tout-à-fait merveilleux. En un même tems l'erreur a été convaincuë, la superstition abolie, la guerre éteinte, la paix rappelée, l'unité de Dieu reconnuë, la Majesté de l'Empire Romain établie. Tous les hommes ont commencé alors à s'embrasser comme des enfans nez du même Pere qui est Dieu, & de la même Mere qui est l'Eglise. Le monde n'a plus été qu'une famille dont tous les membres étoient unis par une parfaite intelligence. Tous les peuples ont voiagé en sureté d'Orient en Occident, & d'Occident en Orient, selon les anciennes Prophéties, qui ont été faites

Au Ps. 71. touchant le Verbe. *Sa domination*, dit l'Ecriture, *s'étendra depuis une mer jusqu'à l'autre mer ; & depuis le fleuve jusqu'aux extrémitez du monde. Les justes fleuriront sous son régne, la paix y régnera avec abondance.*

Isaïe ch. 2. Dans un autre endroit elle dit ce qui suit. *Ils forgeront de leurs épées des socs de charrue & de leurs lances des faux. Un peuple ne tirera plus l'épée contre un peuple, & ils ne s'exerceront plus à combattre l'un contre l'autre.* Il y a plusieurs siécles que ces Prophéties ont été écrites en langue Hebraïque, & l'accomplissement que nous en avons vû en nos jours en confirme la vérité. Que si vous desirez d'autres preuves, au lieu d'attendre de moi des paroles, considérez les choses mêmes. Ouvrez les yeux de vôtre esprit, faites réfléxion sur vous-même, interrogez-vous, & vous demandez quel Roi ou quel Prince, quel Philosophe, ou quel Législateur, quel Prophéte, soit Grec ou Barbare, a jamais

jamais aquis un si absolu pouvoir, & une si haute réputation, que de faire publier ses loüanges durant sa vie, par la bouche de tous les peuples? Nôtre Sauveur a sans doute eu seul cét avantage, lors qu'aprés avoir vaincu la mort, il a dit à ses Disciples : *Allez enseigner toutes les nations en mon nom.* Il leur a prédit que son Evangile seroit publié par toute la terre, & a accompli incontinent sa prédiction. Ceux qui condamnoient le commencement de mon discours dans le secret de leur cœur peuvent-ils reprocher ce témoignage que leurs propres yeux rendent contre eux-mêmes? Qui est-ce qui a exterminé la troupe pernicieuse des démons qui dévoroient depuis plusieurs siécles tous les peuples, & qui leur imposoient par les mouvemens qu'ils imprimoient aux statuës? Qui est-ce qui a donné à ceux qui observent fidélement les préceptes de nôtre Religion, le pouvoir de chasser par leurs priéres les restes de ces esprits impurs? n'est-ce pas nôtre Sauveur? Y a-t-il quelqu'autre que lui qui ait enseigné à ses sectateurs à offrir des sacrifices raisonnables, & non sanglans, qui ne consistent qu'en la pureté des priéres, & en l'invocation du nom de Dieu? Qui a élevé par toute la terre des Eglises & des Autels, & établi de Saints Ministres pour offrir à Dieu seul des Sacrifices spirituels où l'on ne répand point de sang, où l'on n'allume point de feu, où l'on ne sent point de fumée? Qui a aboli les immolations cruelles & meurtriéres qui étoient en usage parmi toutes les Nations? Les Histoires des Païens témoignent que la coûtume d'égorger des victimes ne fut abolie qu'au tems du régne de l'Empereur Adrien. La puissance du Divin Sauveur aiant éclaté aprés sa mort par des miracles si évidens, y a-t-il encore quelqu'un assez opiniâtre pour revoquer en doute la vérité de sa résurrection? Les grandes actions que nous

S. Math. ch. 18.

voions de nos propres yeux, sont des ouvrages qui ne peuvent appartenir qu'à des personnes vivantes, & non à des personnes mortes. Jugeons par les choses que nous voions, de celles que nous ne saurions voir. Il n'y a que deux jours que l'insolence & la fureur des impies troubloit la tranquillité publique, & faisoit de tout l'Univers un funeste théatre de confusion & de desordre. La fin de leur vie a été aussi celle de leur réputation, & depuis qu'ils ont été enlevez du monde, leur nom a été en horreur. Voila l'état où la mort a réduit les hommes. On ne considére point ceux qui ne sont plus, parce que ceux qui ne sont *plus* ne peuvent rien faire. Que si quelqu'un agit, & qu'il agisse avec un pouvoir plus absolu que ceux qui vivent, comment pourroit-on croire qu'il ne seroit plus? Il est vrai qu'on ne sauroit le voir par les yeux du corps. Mais l'esprit a beaucoup de connoissances qu'il n'aquiert pas par le ministére des yeux. Jamais personne n'a rien vû des préceptes des siences. Jamais personne n'a vû ni son ame, ni la nature de Dieu. Ce sont des substances qui ne se font connoître que par leurs opérations. La puissance du Sauveur étant invisible de la même sorte, on ne peut juger d'elle que par les œuvres qu'elle produit. Il faut examiner si les illustres exploits qu'elle fait encore aujourd'hui sont les exploits d'une personne qui est, ou d'une personne qui n'est plus, ou plûtôt si ce n'est pas la derniére extravagance de proposer sérieusement cette question, & d'en témoigner le moindre doute. Comment attribueroit-on des actions si merveilleuses & si éclatantes à une personne qui ne seroit plus, puisque du consentement de tout le monde, il faut étre pour agir? Les morts sont en cét état, & ceux qui vivent sont en un état tout contraire.

Chap. 17. Considérons maintenant les glorieux exploits que

que le Divin Sauveur a entrepris, & exécutez en nôtre tems, & voions si ce ne sont pas les exploits d'un Dieu. Quelqu'un demandera peut-étre quels sont ces exploits. Je vous les expliquerai si vous avez agréable de m'honorer de vôtre attention ordinaire. Il n'y a pas long-tems que les ennemis de Dieu ont eu l'insolence de tirer contre lui les traits empoisonnez de leur langue impie, de prendre les armes pour démolir ses Eglises, & pour renverser ses Autels. Mais il les a chatiez. Il les a enlevez au milieu de leurs délices; & en les privant de la vie, il les a privez de l'autorité souveraine, & de tous les honneurs qui l'accompagnent. Dés qu'ils eurent pris les armes contre lui, & qu'ils se furent rangez en bataille soûs la conduite des faux Dieux qu'ils adoroient, ils furent défaits & contraints de prendre la fuite, d'avoüer la Divinité de celui qu'ils avoient si témérairement attaqué, & de permettre l'exercice de nôtre Religion, qu'ils avoient interdite soûs des peines tres-rigoureuses. Le Sauveur éleva à l'heure-même dans toutes les parties de la terre des monumens de sa victoire. Il remplit les villes, la campagne, & les païs les plus deserts, d'Eglises consacrées en l'honneur du seul Roi, & du seul Seigneur du monde; Et c'est pour cela qu'elles portent son nom, & que l'on les appele les maisons du Seigneur. Que ceux qui voudront s'avancent au milieu de cette assemblée, & qu'ls nous disent qui sont ceux qui ont tiré les Eglises de leurs ruines, & qui les ont élevées jusques au comble. Qui sont ceux qui leur ont donné plus de beauté & de magnificence qu'elles n'en avoient jamais eûe, & qui sont venus à bout d'un si grand dessein, non depuis la mort des ennemis de la piété, mais durant leur vie, & au tems qu'ils revoquoient leurs Edits, non par aucun sentiment d'humanité & de douceur, mais par la force des

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châtimens qu'ils avoient déja reçus du Ciel. Qu'ils nous disent qui est celui qui a eu le pouvoir de retenir dans sa Religion, durant la chaleur des persécutions, & au milieu des plus terribles dangers, un nombre innombrable d'hommes qui faisoient profession de la véritable sagesse, de saintes femmes, & de sacrées vierges qui avoient renoncé à tous les plaisirs des sens. Qui leur avoit enseigné à vivre, selon les régles de la tempérance, à s'abstenir plusieurs jours de boire & de manger, & à user envers eux-mêmes d'une tres-grande sévérité. Qui leur a appris à mêpriser le pain, & à chercher le pain spirituel de la parole, qui est la véritable nourriture de l'ame. Qui a inspiré à des peuples barbares, à des hommes grossiers, à des femmes foibles, à des esclaves & à des enfans, un courage assez élevé & assez intrépide pour affronter la mort, pour se promettre l'immortalité, pour attendre le Jugement où Dieu recompensera toutes les vertus, & punira tous les vices, & pour s'aquiter exactement de tous les devoirs de la justice, & de la piété. Il est clair que quiconque sera dans une disposition différente de celle où se trouvoient ces personnes, ne fera jamais profession de la vertu. Il n'y a jamais eu que le Sauveur qui ait fait, ni qui fasse encore tout ce que je viens de dire. Tâchons d'émouvoir les plus insensibles, & de convaincre les plus opiniâtres. Répondez à ce que je vous demanderai, & répondez-y raisonnablement; & aprés avoir examiné sérieusement vôtre réponse. Y a-t-il eu quelqu'un de ceux qui dans les siécles passez se sont rendus célébres par l'étude de la Philosophie, qui ait été annoncé comme nôtre Sauveur par les Prophétes, & prêché au peuple Juif, qui étoit le seul peuple chéri de Dieu? Ils ont sû par la voie de la révélation le païs où il devoit naître, le tems auquel il devoit se manifester aux hommes, les miracles qu'il

qu'il opéreroit, la doctrine qu'il leur enseigneroit, & ils ont récrit toutes ces choses. Qui est-ce qui a jamais puni les crimes commis contre lui, par un aussi promt châtiment, qu'a été celui qui a ébranlé la Nation entiére des Juifs, & renversé de fond en comble leur Temple, un peu aprés qu'ils eurent attenté à la vie du Sauveur? Qui est-ce qui a prédit aussi clairement l'avenir, qui a marqué aussi précisément toutes les circonstances du châtiment des impies, & de la fondation de l'Eglise, & qui a confirmé par des effets aussi sensibles la vérité de ses prédictions? En parlant du Temple des impies il avoit dit; *Le tems s'approche que vos maisons demeureront toutes desertes. Elles seront tellement détruites, qu'il n'y demeurera pas pierre sur pierre.* Et en parlant de son Eglise, il dit : *Sur cette pierre je bâtirai mon Eglise, & les portes de l'Enfer ne prévaudront point contre elle.* Quel jugement ferez-vous du changement qu'il a opéré dans ses Disciples, quand il les a tirez de la pêche pour les établir Docteurs & Législateurs de l'Univers? La promesse qu'il leur fit de les rendre pêcheurs d'hommes, & l'accomplissement de cette promesse, ne sont-ce pas de fortes preuves de sa Divinité? La capacité qu'il leur a donnée d'écrire des livres, n'en est-elle pas une tres-évidente, & sur tout des livres qui ont été traduits en toutes les langues, appris par tous les peuples, & révérez comme des oracles? Que dirons-nous de ce qu'il a averti ses Disciples de tout ce qui leur devoit arriver, de ce qu'ils seroient conduits devant les Rois & les Princes, & punis des plus rigoureux supplices, non pour aucuns crimes qu'ils auroient commis, mais pour la fidélité & la hardiesse avec laquelle ils auroient confessé son nom? Où pourrions-nous trouver des paroles qui approchassent de la force qu'il leur inspira, de résister à leurs ennemis, sans être plus émus de leur violence,

En S. Math. ch. 23. & 24.

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que les rochers le font de celle des vagues ? Y a-t-il rien de si admirable que la constance, non seulement des Apôtres, mais aussi de leurs successeurs, & des fidéles de nôtre siécle, qui bien qu'*ils* fussent tres-innocens, ont souffert avec joie les plus cruels supplices, plûtôt que de renoncer à la pieté? Quel Prince a jamais prolongé son régne l'espace de tant de siécles ? Qui a jamais fait la guerre de la sorte aprés sa mort ; & qui a jamais réduit tant de Nations à son obéïssance par une force secréte & invisible ? La calomnie, pour impudente qu'elle puisse étre, n'est elle pas confonduë *par la* paix que sa puissance a renduë à toute la terre ? Ce *qui* l'a réduit à un honteux silence, c'est que cette paix est renduë au même tems que la doctrine du Sauveur est publiée, comme les Prophétes avoient prédit que ces deux notables évenemens arriveroient conjointement. Le jour finiroit avant que j'eusse fini mon discours, tres-religieux Empereur, si je voulois ramasser toutes les preuves que les choses qui se font en nos jours me pourroient fournir, de la grandeur de la puissance du Verbe. Il est certain que jamais Grec ni Barbare n'en fit paroître une semblable dans tous les siécles passez.

Ceux-mêmes que les Paiens appelent des Dieux, n'ont rien pû faire d'approchant. Si ce que je dis n'est pas véritable, je consens que quelqu'un m'interrompe, & qu'il me convainque d'imposture. Paroissez ici Philosophes, & me dites si depuis le commencement du monde on a entendu parler d'un Dieu ou d'un Héros, qui ait donné des préceptes pour arriver à la vie éternelle, & pour aquêrir le Roiaume du Ciel, semblable à ceux que nôtre Sauveur nous a donnez ? Qui a pû persuader comme lui les hommes de faire profession d'une sainte Philosophie, & d'aspirer au bon-heur qui est préparé aprés cette vie à la vertu ? Quel Dieu, quel Héros, ou quel homme a jamais passé d'O-

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rient en Occident d'un pas égal à celui du Soleil, & qui a répandu les raions d'une doctrine celeste, qui enseigne à rendre à Dieu le culte qui n'est dû qu'à lui? Quel Dieu ou quel Héros a mis soûs le joug les Dieux des Grecs & des Barbares, a aboli leur culte, a défait par la force de ses armes le parti qu'ils protégeoient, & a excité tous les peuples a reconnoître la puissance & la Divinité du Fils unique de Dieu? Qui a commandé aux peuples de l'Univers de s'assembler toutes les semaines pour honorer le jour du Seigneur, & pour célébrer une Fête, non par des festins qui chargent le corps, mais par la lecture & par la méditation qui nourrissent l'ame? Quel Dieu, ou quel Héros a été attaqué par un aussi grand nombre d'ennemis que nôtre Sauveur, & qui les a réduits comme lui à son obéïssance? Ces ennemis n'ont jamais cessé de combattre sa doctrine, & ses Disciples. Et il n'a jamais cessé de protéger invisiblement ses serviteurs, & depuis peu de jours il a rendu fort célébres les lieux de leurs assemblées. Qu'est-il besoin que je fasse ici son éloge, puis qu'il est au dessus de l'éloquence des hommes? Ses actions parlent d'elles-mêmes, & se font assez entendre à ceux qui n'ont pas les oreilles de l'ame bouchées. C'est sans doute un miracle nouveau, & inoüi, que le Fils de Dieu, qui de toute éternité étoit dans le sein de son Pere, soit venu converser visiblement avec les hommes, & les ait comblez de tant de graces.

Tout ce que je dis ici est tres-inutile pour vous, tres-religieux Empereur, qui aiant reconnu par des effets qui sont plus forts que mes paroles, la Divinité du Fils de Dieu, l'avez toûjours depuis publiée. Vous nous raconterez quand vous l'aurez agréable à vos heures de loisir, combien-de-fois il est apparu visiblement devant vous, combien-de-fois il vous a déclaré ses intentions durant vô- Chap. 18.

tre sommeil. Je ne parle pas des mystéres qu'il vous a révélez & qui sont au dessus de nos pensées. Je ne parle que des préceptes qu'il vous a donnez pour le gouvernement des peuples, & pour le bien commun de l'Univers. Vous nous direz quand il vous plaira, la protection visible dont il vous a favorisé dans les combats en vous découvrant les ruses de vos ennemis, en vous retirant du milieu des dangers, en vous accompagnant dans la solitude, en vous éclairant dans vos doutes, en vous assurant dans vos craintes, en vous avertissant de l'avenir. Vous nous direz les conseils qu'il vous a inspirez pour former & pour conduire les plus importantes entreprises, pour ranger vos armées, pour pourvoir aux besoins de l'Etat, pour publier de saintes loix. Vous nous apprendrez quand il vous plaira, toutes ces choses que nous ignorons, que vous savez parfaitement, & dont vous conservez des idées fort claires & fort distinctes dans le tresor de vôtre mémoire. Ce sont sans doute ces effets sensibles de la bonté du Sauveur, & ces preuves illustres de sa puissance qui vous ont porté à élever cette Eglise, afin qu'elle servît d'un monument public pour avertir les fidéles & les infidéles de la victoire qu'il a remportée sur la mort, & pour representer sur la terre une image de l'empire, & de la gloire dont ses serviteurs joüiront dans le Ciel.

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The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine

The Oration of the Emperor Constantine

The Oration in Praise of the Emperor Constantine

by

Eusebius

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Book I.

Chapter I. *Preface.-Of the Death of Constantine.*

Already[1] have all mankind united in celebrating with joyous festivities the completion of the second and third decennial period of this great emperor's reign; already have we ourselves received him as a triumphant conqueror in the assembly of God's ministers, and greeted him with the due meed of praise on the twentieth anniversary of his reign:[2] and still more recently we have woven, as it were, garlands of words, wherewith we encircled his sacred head in his own palace on his thirtieth anniversary.[3]

But now, while I desire[4] to give utterance to some of the customary sentiments, I stand perplexed and doubtful which way to turn, being wholly lost in wonder at the extraordinary spectacle before me. For to whatever quarter I direct my view, whether to the east, or to the west, or over the whole world, or toward heaven itself, everywhere and always I see the blessed one yet administering the self-same empire. On earth I behold his sons, like some new reflectors of his brightness, diffusing everywhere the luster of their father's character,[5] and himself still living and powerful, and governing all the affairs of men more completely than ever before, being multiplied in the succession of his children. They had indeed had previously the dignity of Caesars;[6] but now, being invested with his very self, and graced by his accomplishments, for the excellence of their piety they are proclaimed by the titles of Sovereign, Augustus, Worshipful, and Emperor.

Chapter II. *The Preface Continued.*

And I am indeed amazed, when I consider that he who was but lately visible and present with us in his mortal

body, is still, even after death, when the natural thought disclaims everything superfluous as unsuitable, most marvelously endowed with the same imperial dwellings, and honors, and praises as heretofore.[7] But farther, when I raise my thoughts even to the arch of heaven, and there contemplate his thrice-blessed soul in communion with God himself, freed from every mortal and earthly vesture, and shining in a refulgent robe of light, and when I perceive that it is no more connected with the fleeting periods and occupations of mortal life, but honored with an ever-blooming crown, and an immortality of endless and blessed existence, I stand as it were without power of speech or thought[8] and unable to utter a single phrase, but condemning my own weakness, and imposing silence on myself, I resign the task of speaking his praises worthily to one who is better able, even to him who, being the immortal God and veritable Word, alone has power to confirm his own saying.[9]

Chapter III. *How God Honors Pious Princes, But Destroys Tyrants.*

Having given assurance that those who glorify and honor him will meet with an abundant recompense at his hands, while those who set themselves against him as enemies and adversaries will compass the ruin of their own souls, he has already established the truth of these his own declarations, having shown on the one hand the fearful end of those tyrants who denied and opposed him,[10] and at the same time having made it manifest that even the death of his servant, as well as his life, is worthy of admiration and praise, and justly claims the memorial, not merely of perishable, but of immortal monuments. Mankind, devising some consolation for the frail and precarious duration of human life, have thought by the erection of monuments to glorify the memories of their ancestors with immortal honors. Some have employed

the vivid delineations and colors of painting[11] ; some have carved statues from lifeless blocks of wood; while others, by engraving their inscriptions deep on tablets[12] and monuments, have thought to transmit the virtues of those whom they honored to perpetual remembrance. All these indeed are perishable, and consumed by the lapse of time, being representations of the corruptible body, and not expressing the image of the immortal soul. And yet these seemed sufficient to those who had no well-grounded hope of happiness after the termination of this mortal life. But God, that God, I say, who is the common Saviour of all, having treasured up with himself, for those who love godliness, greater blessings than human thought has conceived, gives the earnest and first-fruits of future rewards even here, assuring in some sort immortal hopes to mortal eyes. The ancient oracles of the prophets, delivered to us in the Scripture, declare this; the lives of pious men, who shone in old time with every virtue, bear witness to posterity of the same; and our own days prove it to be true, wherein Constantine, who alone of all that ever wielded the Roman power was the friend of God the Sovereign of all, has appeared to all mankind so clear an example of a godly life.

Chapter IV. *That God Honored Constantine.*

And God himself, whom Constantine worshiped, has confirmed this truth by the clearest manifestations of his will, being present to aid him[13] at the commencement, during the course, and at the end of his reign, and holding him up to the human race as an instructive example of godliness. Accordingly, by the manifold blessings he has conferred on him, he has distinguished him alone of all the sovereigns of whom we have ever heard as at once a mighty luminary and most clear-voiced herald of genuine piety.

Chapter V. That He Reigned Above Thirty

Years, and Lived Above Sixty.

With respect to the duration of his reign, God honored him with three complete periods of ten years, and something more, extending the whole term of his mortal life to twice this number of years.[14] And being pleased to make him a representative of his own sovereign power, he displayed him as the conqueror of the whole race of tyrants, and the destroyer of those God-defying giants[15] of the earth who madly raised their impious arms against him, the supreme King of all. They appeared, so to speak, for an instant, and then disappeared: while the one and only true God, when he had enabled his servant, clad in heavenly panoply, to stand singly against many foes, and by his means had relieved mankind from the multitude of the ungodly, constituted him a teacher of his worship to all nations, to testify with a loud voice in the hearing of all that he acknowledged the true God, and turned with abhorrence from the error of them that are no gods.

Chapter VI. *That He Was the Servant of God, and the Conqueror of Nations.*

Thus, like a faithful and good servant, did he act and testify, openly declaring and confessing himself the obedient minister of the supreme King. And God forthwith rewarded him, by making him ruler and sovereign, and victorious to such a degree that he alone of all rulers pursued a continual course of conquest, unsubdued and invincible, and through his trophies a greater ruler than tradition records ever to have been before. So dear was he to God, and so blessed; so pious and so fortunate in all that he undertook, that with the greatest facility he obtained the authority over more nations than any who had preceded him,[16] and yet retained his power, undisturbed, to the very close of his life.

Chapter VII. *Comparison with Cyrus, King of*

the Persians, and with Alexander of Macedon.

Ancient history describes Cyrus, king of the Persians, as by far the most illustrious of all kings up to his time. And yet if we regard the end of his days,[17] we find it but little corresponded with his past prosperity, since he met with an inglorious and dishonorable death at the hands of a woman.[18]

Again, the sons of Greece celebrate Alexander the Macedonian as the conqueror of many and diverse nations; yet we find that he was removed by an early death, before he had reached maturity, being carried off by the effects of revelry and drunkenness.[19] His whole life embraced but the space of thirty-two years, and his reign extended to no more than a third part of that period. Unsparing as the thunderbolt, he advanced through streams of blood and reduced entire nations and cities, young and old, to utter slavery. But when he had scarcely arrived at the maturity of life, and was lamenting the loss of youthful pleasures, death fell upon him with terrible stroke, and, that he might not longer outrage the human race, cut him off in a foreign and hostile land, childless, without successor, and homeless. His kingdom too was instantly dismembered, each of his officers taking away and appropriating a portion for himself. And yet this man is extolled for such deeds as these.[20]

Chapter VIII. *That He Conquered Nearly the Whole World.*

But our emperor began his reign at the time of life at which the Macedonian died, yet doubled the length of his life, and trebled the length of his reign. And instructing his army in the mild and sober precepts of godliness, he carried his arms as far as the Britons, and the nations that dwell in the very bosom of the Western ocean. He subdued likewise all Scythia, though situated in the remotest North, and divided into numberless diverse and

barbarous tribes. He even pushed his conquests to the Blemmyans and Ethiopians, on the very confines of the South; nor did he think the acquisition of the Eastern nations unworthy his care. In short, diffusing the effulgence of his holy light to the ends of the whole world, even to the most distant Indians, the nations dwelling on the extreme circumference of the inhabited earth, he received the submission of all the rulers,[21] governors,[22] and satraps of barbarous nations, who cheerfully welcomed and saluted him, sending embassies and presents, and setting the highest value on his acquaintance and friendship; insomuch that they honored him with pictures and statues in their respective countries, and Constantine alone of all emperors was acknowledged and celebrated by all. Notwithstanding, even among these distant nations, he proclaimed the name of his God in his royal edicts with all boldness.

Chapter IX. *That He Was the Son of a Pious Emperor, and Bequeathed the Power to Royal Sons.*

Nor did he give this testimony in words merely, while exhibiting failure in his own practice, but pursued every path of virtue, and was rich in the varied fruits of godliness. He ensured the affection of his friends by magnificent proofs of liberality; and inasmuch as he governed on principles of humanity, he caused his rule to be but lightly felt and acceptable to all classes of his subjects; until at last, after a long course of years, and when he was wearied by his divine labors, the God whom he honored crowned him with an immortal reward, and translated him from a transitory kingdom to that endless life which he has laid up in store for the souls of his saints, after he had raised him up three sons to succeed him in his power. As then the imperial throne had descended to him from his father, so, by the law of

nature, was it reserved for his children and their descendants, and perpetuated, like some paternal inheritance, to endless generations. And indeed God himself, who distinguished this blessed prince with divine honors while yet present with us, and who has adorned his death with choice blessings from his own hand, should be the writer of his actions; since he has recorded his labors and successes on heavenly monuments.[23]

Chapter X. *Of the Need for This History, and Its Value for Edification.*

However, hard as it is to speak worthily of this blessed character, and though silence were the safer and less perilous course, nevertheless it is incumbent on me, if I would escape the charge of negligence and sloth, to trace as it were a verbal portraiture, by way of memorial of the pious prince, in imitation of the delineations of human art. For I should be ashamed of myself were I not to employ my best efforts, feeble though they be and of little value, in praise of one who honored God with such surpassing devotion. I think too that my work will be on other grounds both instructive and necessary, since it will contain a description of those royal and noble actions which are pleasing to God, the Sovereign of all. For would it not be disgraceful that the memory of Nero, and other impious and godless tyrants far worse than he, should meet with diligent writers to embellish the relation of their worthless deeds with elegant language, and record them in voluminous histories, and that I should be silent, to whom God himself has vouchsafed such an emperor as all history records not, and has permitted me to come into his presence, and enjoy his acquaintance and society?[24]

Wherefore, if it is the duty of any one, it certainly is mine, to make an ample proclamation of his virtues to all

in whom the example of noble actions is capable of inspiring the love of God. For some who have written the lives of worthless characters, and the history of actions but little tending to the improvement of morals, from private motives, either love or enmity, and possibly in some cases with no better object than the display of their own learning, have exaggerated unduly their description of actions intrinsically base, by a refinement and elegance of diction.[25] And thus they have become to those who by the Divine favor had been kept apart from evil, teachers not of good, but of what should be silenced in oblivion and darkness. But my narrative, however unequal to the greatness of the deeds it has to describe, will yet derive luster even from the bare relation of noble actions. And surely the record of conduct that has been pleasing to God will afford a far from unprofitable, indeed a most instructive study, to persons of well-disposed minds.

Chapter XI. *That His Present Object is to Record Only the Pious Actions of Constantine.*

It is my intention, therefore, to pass over the greater part of the royal deeds of this thrice-blessed prince; as, for example, his conflicts and engagements in the field, his personal valor, his victories and successes against the enemy, and the many triumphs he obtained: likewise his provisions for the interests of individuals, his legislative enactments for the social advantage of his subjects, and a multitude of other imperial labors which are fresh in the memory of all; the design of my present undertaking being to speak and write of those circumstances only which have reference to his religious character.

And since these are themselves of almost infinite variety, I shall select from the facts which have come to my knowledge such as are most suitable, and worthy of lasting record, and endeavor to narrate them as briefly as

possible. Henceforward, indeed, there is a full and free opportunity for celebrating in every way the praises of this truly blessed prince, which hitherto we have been unable to do, on the ground that we are forbidden to judge any one blessed before his death,[26] because of the uncertain vicissitudes of life. Let me implore then the help of God, and may the inspiring aid of the heavenly Word be with me, while I commence my history from the very earliest period of his life.

Chapter XII. *That Like Moses, He Was Reared in the Palaces of Kings.*

Ancient history relates that a cruel race of tyrants oppressed the Hebrew nation; and that God, who graciously regarded them in their affliction, provided that the prophet Moses, who was then an infant, should be brought up in the very palaces and bosoms of the oppressors, and instructed in all the wisdom they possessed. And when in the course of time he had arrived at manhood, and the time was come for Divine justice to avenge the wrongs of the afflicted people, then the prophet of God, in obedience to the will of a more powerful Lord, forsook the royal household, and, estranging himself in word and deed from the tyrants by whom he had been brought up, openly acknowledging his true brethren and kinsfolk. Then God, exalting him to be the leader of the whole nation, delivered the Hebrews from the bondage of their enemies, and inflicted Divine vengeance through his means on the tyrant race. This ancient story, though rejected by most as fabulous, has reached the ears of all. But now the same God has given to us to be eye-witnesses of miracles more wonderful than fables, and, from their recent appearance, more authentic than any report. For the tyrants of our day have ventured to war against the Supreme God, and have sorely afflicted His Church.[27] And in the midst of these,

Constantine, who was shortly to become their destroyer, but at that time of tender age, and blooming with the down of early youth, dwelt, as that other servant of God had done, in the very home of the tyrants,[28] but young as he was did not share the manner of life of the ungodly: for from that early period his noble nature, under the leading of the Divine Spirit, inclined him to piety and a life acceptable to God. A desire, moreover, to emulate the example of his father had its influence in stimulating the son to a virtuous course of conduct His father was Constantius[29] (and we ought to revive his memory at this time), the most illustrious emperor of our age; of whose life it is necessary briefly to relate a few particulars, which tell to the honor of his son.

Chapter XIII. *Of Constantius His Father, Who Refused to Imitate Diocletian, Maximian, and Maxentius,*[30] *In Their Persecution of the Christians.*

At a time when four emperors[31] shared the administration of the Roman empire, Constantius alone, following a course of conduct different from that pursued by his colleagues, entered into the friendship of the Supreme God.

For while they besieged and wasted the churches of God, leveling them to the ground, and obliterating the very foundations of the houses of prayer,[32] he kept his hands pure from their abominable impiety, and never in any respect resembled them. They polluted their provinces by the indiscriminate slaughter of godly men and women; but he kept his soul free from the stain of this crime.[33] They, involved in the mazes of impious idolatry, enthralled first themselves, and then all under their authority, in bondage to the errors of evil demons, while he at the same time originated the profoundest peace

throughout his dominions, and secured to his subjects the privilege of celebrating without hindrance the worship of God. In short, while his colleagues oppressed all men by the most grievous exactions, and rendered their lives intolerable, and even worse than death, Constantius alone governed his people with a mild and tranquil sway, and exhibited towards them a truly parental and fostering care. Numberless, indeed, are the other virtues of this man, which are the theme of praise to all; of these I will record one or two instances, as specimens of the quality of those which I must pass by in silence, and then I will proceed to the appointed order of my narrative.

Chapter XIV. *How Constantius His Father, Being Reproached with Poverty by Diocletian, Filled His Treasury, and Afterwards Restored the Money to Those by Whom It Had Been Contributed.*

In consequence of the many reports in circulation respecting this prince, describing his kindness and gentleness of character, and the extraordinary elevation of his piety, alleging too, that by reason of his extreme indulgence to his subjects, he had not even a supply of money laid up in his treasury; the emperor who at that time occupied the place of supreme power sent to reprehend his neglect of the public weal, at the same time reproaching him with poverty, and alleging in proof of the charge the empty state of his treasury. On this he desired the messengers of the emperor to remain with him awhile, and, calling together the wealthiest of his subjects of all nations under his dominion, he informed them that he was in want of money, and that this was the time for them all to give a voluntary proof of their affection for their prince.

As soon as they heard this (as though they had long been desirous of an opportunity for showing the sincerity of

their good will), with zealous alacrity they filled the treasury with gold and silver and other wealth; each eager to surpass the rest in the amount of his contribution: and this they did with cheerful and joyous countenances. And now Constantius desired the messengers of the great emperor[34] personally to inspect his treasures, and directed them to give a faithful report of what they had seen; adding, that on the present occasion he had taken this money into his own hands, but that it had long been kept for his use in the custody of the owners, as securely as if under the charge of faithful treasurers. The ambassadors were overwhelmed with astonishment at what they had witnessed: and on their departure it is said that the truly generous prince sent for the owners of the property, and, after commending them severally for their obedience and true loyalty, restored it all, and bade them return to their homes.

This one circumstance, then, conveys a proof of the generosity of him whose character we are attempting to illustrate: another will contain the clearest testimony to his piety.

Chapter XV. *Of the Persecution Raised by His Colleagues.*

By command of the supreme authorities of the empire, the governors of the several provinces had set on foot a general persecution of the godly. Indeed, it was from the imperial courts themselves that the very first of the pious martyrs proceeded, who passed through those conflicts for the faith, and most readily endured both fire and sword, and the depths of the sea; every form of death, in short, so that in a brief time all the royal palaces were bereft of pious men.[35] The result was, that the authors of this wickedness were entirely deprived of the protecting care of God, since by their persecution of his worshipers they at the same time silenced the prayers that were wont

to be made on their own behalf.

Chapter XVI. *How Constantius, Feigning Idolatry, Expelled Those Who Consented to Offer Sacrifice, But Retained in His Palace All Who Were Willing to Confess Christ.*

On the other hand, Constantius conceived an expedient full of sagacity, and did a thing which sounds paradoxical, but in fact was most admirable.

He made a proposal to all the officers of his court, including even those in the highest stations of authority, offering them the following alternative: either that they should offer sacrifice to demons, and thus be permitted to remain with him, and enjoy their usual honors; or, in case of refusal, that they should be shut out from all access to his person, and entirely disqualified from acquaintance and association with him. Accordingly, when they had individually made their choice, some one way and some the other; and the choice of each had been ascertained, then this admirable prince disclosed the secret meaning of his expedient, and condemned the cowardice and selfishness of the one party, while he highly commended the other for their conscientious devotion to God. He declared, too, that those who had been false to their God must be unworthy of the confidence of their prince; for how was it possible that they should preserve their fidelity to him, who had proved themselves faithless to a higher power? He determined, therefore, that such persons should be removed altogether from the imperial court, while, on the other hand, declaring that those men who, in bearing witness for the truth, had proved themselves to be worthy servants of God, would manifest the same fidelity to their king, he entrusted them with the guardianship of his person and empire, saying that he was bound to treat such persons with special regard as his nearest and most valued friends, and to esteem them

far more highly than the richest treasures.

Chapter XVII. *Of His Christian Manner of Life.*

The father of Constantine, then, is said to have possessed such a character as we have briefly described. And what kind of death was vouchsafed to him in consequence of such devotion to God, and how far he whom he honored made his lot to differ from that of his colleagues in the empire, may be known to any one who will give his attention to the circumstances of the case. For after he had for a long time given many proofs of royal virtue, in acknowledging the Supreme God alone, and condemning the polytheism of the ungodly, and had fortified his household by the prayers of holy men,[36] he passed the remainder of his life in remarkable repose and tranquillity, in the enjoyment of what is counted blessedness,-neither molesting others nor being molested ourselves.

Accordingly, during the whole course of his quiet and peaceful reign, he dedicated his entire household, his children, his wife, and domestic attendants, to the One Supreme God: so that the company assembled within the walls of his palace differed in no respect from a church of God; wherein were also to be found his ministers, who offered continual supplications on behalf of their prince, and this at a time when, with most,[37] it was not allowable to have any dealings with the worshipers of God, even so far as to exchange a word with them.

Chapter XVIII. *That After the Abdication of Diocletian and Maximian, Constantius Became Chief Augustus, and Was Blessed with a Numerous Offspring.*

The immediate consequence of this conduct was a recompense from the hand of God, insomuch that he came into the supreme authority of the empire. For the

older emperors, for some unknown reason, resigned their power; and this sudden change took place in the first year after their persecution of the churches.[38]

From that time Constantius alone received the honors of chief Augustus, having been previously, indeed, distinguished by the diadem of the imperial Caesars,[39] among whom he held the first rank; but after his worth had been proved in this capacity, he was invested with the highest dignity of the Roman empire, being named chief Augustus of the four who were afterwards elected to that honor. Moreover, he surpassed most of the emperors in regard to the number of his family, having gathered around him a very large circle of children both male and female. And, lastly, when he had attained to a happy old age, and was about to pay the common debt of nature, and exchange this life for another, God once more manifested His power in a special manner on his behalf, by providing that his eldest son Constantine should be present during his last moments, and ready to receive the imperial power from his hands.[40]

Chapter XIX. *Of His Son Constantine, Who in His Youth Accompanied Diocletian into Palestine.*

The latter had been with his father's imperial colleagues,[41] and had passed his life among them, as we have said, like God's ancient prophet. And even in the very earliest period of his youth he was judged by them to be worthy of the highest honor. An instance of this we have ourselves seen, when he passed through Palestine with the senior emperor,[42] at whose right hand he stood, and commanded the admiration of all who beheld him by the indications he gave even then of royal greatness. For no one was comparable to him for grace and beauty of person, or height of stature; and he so far surpassed his

compeers in personal strength as to be a terror to them. He was, however, even more conspicuous for the excellence of his mental[43] qualities than for his superior physical endowments; being gifted in the first place with a sound judgment,[44] and having also reaped the advantages of a liberal education. He was also distinguished in no ordinary degree both by natural intelligence and divinely imparted wisdom.

Chapter XX. *Flight of Constantine to His Father Because of the Plots of Diocletian.*[45]

The emperors then in power, observing his manly and vigorous figure and superior mind, were moved with feelings of jealousy and fear, and thenceforward carefully watched for an opportunity of inflicting some brand of disgrace on his character. But the young man, being aware of their designs, the details of which, through the providence of God, more than once came to him, sought safety in flight;[46] in this respect again keeping up his resemblance to the great prophet Moses. Indeed, in every sense God was his helper; and he had before ordained that he should be present in readiness to succeed his father.

Chapter XXI. *Death of Constantius, Who Leaves His Son Constantine Emperor.*[47]

Immediately, therefore, on his escape from the plots which had been thus insidiously laid for him, he made his way with all haste to his father, and arrived at length at the very time that he was lying at the point of death.[48] As soon as Constantius saw his son thus unexpectedly in his presence, he leaped from his couch, embraced him tenderly, and, declaring that the only anxiety which had troubled him in the prospect of death, namely, that caused by the absence of his son, was now removed, he rendered thanks to God, saying that he now thought

death better than the longest life,[49] and at once completed the arrangement of his private affairs. Then, taking a final leave of the circle of sons and daughters by whom he was surrounded, in his own palace, and on the imperial couch, he bequeathed the empire, according to the law of nature,[50] to his eldest son, and breathed his last.

Chapter XXII. *How, After the Burial of Constantius, Constantine Was Proclaimed Augustus by the Army.*

Nor did the imperial throne remain long unoccupied: for Constantine invested himself with his father's purple, and proceeded from his father's palace, presenting to all a renewal, as it were, in his own person, of his father's life and reign. He then conducted the funeral procession in company with his father's friends, some preceding, others following the train, and performed the last offices for the pious deceased with an extraordinary degree of magnificence, and all united in honoring this thrice blessed prince with acclamations and praises, and while with one mind and voice, they glorified the rule of the son as a living again of him who was dead, they hastened at once to hail their new sovereign by the titles of Imperial and Worshipful Augustus, with joyful shouts.[51] Thus the memory of the deceased emperor received honor from the praises bestowed upon his son, while the latter was pronounced blessed in being the successor of such a father. All the nations also under his dominion were filled with joy and inexpressible gladness at not being even for a moment deprived of the benefits of a well ordered government.

In the instance of the Emperor Constantius, God has made manifest to our generation what the end of those is who in their lives have honored and loved him.

Chapter XXIII. *A Brief Notice of the*

Destruction of the Tyrants.

With respect to the other princes, who made war against the churches of God, I have not thought it fit in the present work to give any account of their downfall,[52] nor to stain the memory of the good by mentioning them in connection with those of an opposite character. The knowledge of the facts themselves will of itself suffice for the wholesome admonition of those who have witnessed or heard of the evils which severally befell them.

Chapter XXIV. *It Was by the Will of God that Constantine Became Possessed of the Empire.*

Thus then the God of all, the Supreme Governor of the whole universe, by his own will appointed Constantine, the descendant of so renowned a parent, to be prince and sovereign: so that, while others have been raised to this distinction by the election of their fellow-men, he is the only one to whose elevation no mortal may boast of having contributed.

Chapter XXV. *Victories of Constantine Over the Barbarians and the Britons.*

As soon then as he was established on the throne, he began to care for the interests of his paternal inheritance, and visited with much considerate kindness all those provinces which had previously been under his father's government. Some tribes of the barbarians who dwelt on the banks of the Rhine, and the shores of the Western ocean, having ventured to revolt, he reduced them all to obedience, and brought them from their savage state to one of gentleness. He contented himself with checking the inroads of others, and drove from his dominions, like untamed and savage beasts, those whom he perceived to be altogether incapable of the settled order of civilized life.[53] Having disposed of these affairs to his satisfaction, he directed his attention to other quarters of the world,

and first passed over to the British nations,[54] which lie in the very bosom of the ocean. These he reduced to submission, and then proceeded to consider the state of the remaining portions of the empire, that he might be ready to tender his aid wherever circumstances might require it.

Chapter XXVI. *How He Resolved to Deliver Rome from Maxentius.*

While, therefore, he regarded the entire world as one immense body, and perceived that the head of it all, the royal city of the Roman empire, was bowed down by the weight of a tyrannous oppression; at first he had left the task of liberation to those who governed the other divisions of the empire, as being his superiors in point of age. But when none of these proved able to afford relief, and those who had attempted it had experienced a disastrous termination of their enterprise,[55] he said that life was without enjoyment to him as long as he saw the imperial city thus afflicted, and prepared himself for the overthrowal of the tyranny.

Chapter XXVII. *That After Reflecting on the Dawnfall of Those Who Had Worshiped Idols, He Made Choice of Christianity.*

Being convinced, however, that he needed some more powerful aid than his military forces could afford him, on account of the wicked and magical enchantments which were so diligently practiced by the tyrant,[56] he sought Divine assistance, deeming the possession of arms and a numerous soldiery of secondary importance, but believing the co-operating power of Deity invincible and not to be shaken. He considered, therefore, on what God he might rely for protection and assistance. While engaged in this enquiry, the thought occurred to him, that, of the many emperors who had preceded him, those who had rested their hopes in a multitude of gods, and

served them with sacrifices and offerings, had in the first place been deceived by flattering predictions, and oracles which promised them all prosperity, and at last had met with an unhappy end, while not one of their gods had stood by to warn them of the impending wrath of heaven; while one alone who had pursued an entirely opposite course, who had condemned their error, and honored the one Supreme God during his whole life, had found I him to be the Saviour and Protector of his empire, and the Giver of every good thing. Reflecting on this, and well weighing the fact that they who had trusted in many gods had also fallen by manifold forms of death, without leaving behind them either family or offspring, stock, name, or memorial among men: while the God of his father had given to him, on the other hand, manifestations of his power and very many tokens: and considering farther that those who had already taken arms against the tyrant, and had marched to the battle-field under the protection of a multitude of gods, had met with a dishonorable end (for one of them[57] had shamefully retreated from the contest without a blow, and the other,[58] being slain in the midst of his own troops, became, as it were, the mere sport of death[59]); reviewing, I say, all these considerations, he judged it to be folly indeed to join in the idle worship of those who were no gods, and, after such convincing evidence, to err from the truth; and therefore felt it incumbent on him to honor his father's God alone.

Chapter XXVIII. *How, While He Was Praying, God Sent Him a Vision of a Cross of Light in the Heavens at MID-Day, with an Inscription Admonishing Him to Conquer by that.*

Accordingly he called on him with earnest prayer and supplications that he would reveal to him who he was, and stretch forth his right hand to help him in his present

difficulties. And while he was thus praying with fervent entreaty, a most marvelous sign appeared to him from heaven, the account of which it might have been hard to believe had it been related by any other person. But since the victorious emperor himself long afterwards declared it to the writer of this history,[60] when he was honored with his acquaintance and society, and confirmed his statement by an oath, who could hesitate to accredit the relation, especially since the testimony of after-time has established its truth? He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, Conquer by this. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which followed him on this expedition, and witnessed the miracle.[61]

Chapter XXIX. *How the Christ of God Appeared to Him in His Sleep, and Commanded Him to Use in His Wars a Standard Made in the Form of the Cross.*

He said, moreover, that he doubted within himself what the import of this apparition could be. And while he continued to ponder and reason on its meaning, night suddenly came on; then in his sleep the Christ of God appeared to him with the same sign which he had seen in the heavens, and commanded him to make a likeness of that sign which he had seen in the heavens, and to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies.

Chapter XXX. *The Making of the Standard of the Cross.*

At dawn of day he arose, and communicated the marvel to his friends: and then, calling together the workers in gold and precious stones, he sat in the midst of them, and described to them the figure of the sign he had seen, bidding them represent it in gold and precious stones.

And this representation I myself have had an opportunity of seeing.

Chapter XXXI. *A Description of the Standard of the Cross, Which the Romans Now Call the Labarum.*[62]

Now it was made in the following manner. A long spear, overlaid with gold, formed the figure of the cross by means of a transverse bar laid over it. On the top of the whole was fixed a wreath of gold and precious stones; and within this,[63] the symbol of the Saviour's name, two letters indicating the name of Christ by means of its initial characters, the letter P being intersected by X in its centre:[64] and these letters the emperor was in the habit of wearing on his helmet at a later period. From the cross-bar of the spear was suspended a cloth,[65] a royal piece, covered with a profuse embroidery of most brilliant precious stones; and which, being also richly interlaced with gold, presented an indescribable degree of beauty to the beholder. This banner was of a square form, and the upright staff, whose lower section was of great length,[66] bore a golden half-length portrait[67] of the pious emperor and his children on its upper part, beneath the trophy of the cross, and immediately above the embroidered banner.

The emperor constantly made use of this sign of salvation as a safeguard against every adverse and hostile power, and commanded that others similar to it should be carried at the head of all his armies.

Chapter XXXII. *How Constantine Received Instruction, and Read the Sacred Scriptures.*

These things were done shortly afterwards. But at the time above specified, being struck with amazement at the extraordinary vision, and resolving to worship no other God save Him who had appeared to him, he sent for

those who were acquainted with the mysteries of His doctrines, and enquired who that God was, and what was intended by the sign of the vision he had seen. They affirmed that He was God, the only begotten Son of the one and only God: that the sign which had appeared was the symbol of immortality,[68] and the trophy of that victory over death which He had gained in time past when sojourning on earth. They taught him also the causes of His advent, and explained to him the true account of His incarnation. Thus he was instructed in these matters, and was impressed with wonder at the divine manifestation which had been presented to his sight. Comparing, therefore, the heavenly vision with the interpretation given, he found his judgment confirmed; and, in the persuasion that the knowledge of these things had been imparted to him by Divine teaching, he determined thenceforth to devote himself to the reading of the Inspired writings.

Moreover, he made the priests of God his counselors, and deemed it incumbent on him to honor the God who had appeared to him with all devotion. And after this, being fortified by well-grounded hopes in Him, he hastened to quench the threatening fire of tyranny.

Chapter XXXIII. *Of the Adulterous Conduct of Maxentius at Rome.*[69]

For the who had tyrannically possessed himself of the imperial city,[70] had proceeded to great lengths in impiety and wickedness, so as to venture without hesitation on every vile and impure action.

For example: he would separate women from their husbands, and after a time send them back to them again, and these insults he offered not to men of mean or obscure condition, but to those who held the first places in the Roman senate. Moreover, though he shamefully dishonored almost numberless free women, he was

unable to satisfy his ungoverned and intemperate desires. But[71] when he assayed to corrupt Christian women also, he could no longer secure success to his designs, since they chose rather to submit their lives[72] to death than yield their persons to be defiled by him.

Chapter XXXIV. *How the Wife of a Prefect Slew Herself for Chastity's Sake.*[73]

Now a certain woman, wife of one of the senators who held the authority of prefect, when she understood that those who ministered to the tyrant in such matters were standing before her house (she was a Christian), and knew that her husband through fear had bidden them take her and lead her away, begged a short space of time for arraying herself in her usual dress, and entered her chamber. There, being left alone, she sheathed a sword in her own breast, and immediately expired, leaving indeed her dead body to the procurers, but declaring to all mankind, both to present and future generations, by an act which spoke louder than any words, that the chastity for which Christians are famed is the only thing which is invincible and indestructible. Such was the conduct displayed by this Woman.

Chapter XXXV. *Massacre of the Roman People by Maxentius.*

All men, therefore, both people and magistrates, whether of high or low degree, trembled through fear of him whose daring wickedness was such as I have described, and were oppressed by his grievous tyranny. Nay, though they submitted quietly, and endured this bitter servitude, still there was no escape from the tyrant's sanguinary cruelty. For at one time, on some trifling pretense, he exposed the populace to be slaughtered by his own body-guard; and countless multitudes of the Roman people were slain in the very midst of the city by the lances and weapons, not of Scythians or barbarians, but of their own

fellow-citizens. And besides this, it is impossible to calculate the number of senators whose blood was shed with a view to the seizure of their respective estates, for at different times and on various fictitious charges, multitudes of them suffered death.

Chapter XXXVI. *Magic Arts of Maxentius Against Constantine; And Famine at Rome.*

But the crowning point of the tyrant's wickedness was his having recourse to sorcery: sometimes for magic purposes ripping up women with child, at other times searching into the bowels of new-born infants. He slew lions also, and practiced certain horrid arts for evoking demons, and averting the approaching war, hoping by these means to get the victory. In short, it is impossible to describe the manifold acts of oppression by which this tyrant of Rome enslaved his subjects: so that by this time they were reduced to the most extreme penury and want of necessary food, a scarcity such as our contemporaries do not remember ever before to have existed at Rome.[74]

Chapter XXXVII. *Defeat of Maxentius's Armies in Italy.*

Constantine, however, filled with compassion on account of all these miseries, began to arm himself with all warlike preparation against the tyranny. Assuming therefore the Supreme God as his patron, and invoking His Christ to be his preserver and aid, and setting the victorious trophy, the salutary symbol, in front of his soldiers and body-guard, he marched with his whole forces, trying to obtain again for the Romans the freedom they had inherited from their ancestors.

And whereas, Maxentius, trusting more in his magic arts than in the affection of his subjects, dared not even advance outside the city gates,[75] but had guarded every place and district and city subject to his tyranny, with large bodies of soldiers,[76] the emperor, confiding in the

help of God, advanced against the first and second and third divisions of the tyrant's forces, defeated them all with ease at the first assault,[77] and made his way into the very interior of Italy.

Chapter XXXVIII. *Death of Maxentius on the Bridge of the Tiber.*[78]

And already he was approaching very near Rome itself, when, to save him from the necessity of fighting with all the Romans for the tyrant's sake, God himself drew the tyrant, as it were by secret cords, a long way outside the gates.[79] And now those miracles recorded in Holy Writ, which God of old wrought against the ungodly (discredited by most as fables, yet believed by the faithful), did he in every deed confirm to all alike, believers and unbelievers, who were eye-witnesses of the wonders. For as once in the days of Moses and the Hebrew nation, who were worshipers of God, "Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea and his chosen chariot-captains are drowned in the Red Sea,"[80] -so at this time Maxentius, and the soldiers and guards[81] with him, "went down into the depths like stone,"[82] when, in his flight before the divinely-aided forces of Constantine, he essayed to cross the river which lay in his way, over which, making a strong bridge of boats, he had framed an engine of destruction, really against himself, but in the hope of ensnaring thereby him who was beloved by God. For his God stood by the one to protect him, while the other, godless,[83] proved to be the miserable contriver of these secret devices to his own ruin. So that one might well say, "He hath made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violence shall come down upon his own pate."[84] Thus, in the present instance, under divine direction, the machine

erected on the bridge, with the ambuscade concealed therein, giving way unexpectedly before the appointed time, the bridge began to sink, and the boats with the men in them went bodily to the bottom.[85] And first the wretch himself, then his armed attendants and guards, even as the sacred oracles had before described, "sank as lead in the mighty waters."[86] So that they who thus obtained victory from God might well, if not in the same words, yet in fact in the same spirit as the people of his great servant Moses, sing and speak as they did concerning the impious tyrant of old: "Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath been glorified exceedingly: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. He is become my helper and my shield unto salvation." And again, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, marvelous in praises, doing wonders?"[87]

Chapter XXXIX. *Constantine's Entry into Rome.*

Having then at this time sung these and suchlike praises to God, the Ruler of all and the Author of victory, after the example of his great servant Moses, Constantine entered the imperial city in triumph. And here the whole body of the senate, and others of rank and distinction in the city, freed as it were from the restraint of a prison, along with the whole Roman populace, their countenances expressive of the gladness of their hearts, received him with acclamations and abounding joy; men, women, and children, with countless multitudes of servants, greeting him as deliverer, preserver, and benefactor, with incessant shouts. But he, being possessed of inward piety toward God, was neither rendered arrogant by these plaudits, nor uplifted by the praises he heard:[88] but, being sensible that he had received help from God, he immediately rendered a

thanksgiving to him as the Author of his victory.

Chapter XL. *Of the Statue of Constantine Holding a Cross, and Its Inscription.*

Moreover, by loud proclamation and monumental inscriptions he made known to all men the salutary symbol, setting up this great trophy of victory over his enemies in the midst of the imperial city, and expressly causing it to be engraven in indelible characters, that the salutary symbol was the safeguard of the Roman government and of the entire empire. Accordingly, he immediately ordered a lofty spear in the figure of a cross to be placed beneath the hand of a statue representing himself, in the most frequented part of Rome, and the following inscription to be engraved on it in the Latin language: by virtue of this salutary sign, which is the true test of valor, I have preserved and liberated your city from the yoke of tyranny. I have also set at liberty the roman senate and people, and restored them to their ancient distinction and splendor.[89]

Chapter XLI. *Rejoicings Throughout the Provinces; And Constantine's Acts of Grace.*

Thus the pious emperor, glorying in the confession of the victorious cross, proclaimed the Son of God to the Romans with great boldness of testimony. And the inhabitants of the city, one and all, senate and people, reviving, as it were, from the pressure of a bitter and tyrannical domination, seemed to enjoy purer rays of light, and to be born again into a fresh and new life. All the nations, too, as far as the limit of the western ocean, being set free from the calamities which had heretofore beset them, and gladdened by joyous festivals, ceased not to praise him as the victorious, the pious, the common benefactor: all, indeed, with one voice and one mouth, declared that Constantine had appeared by the grace of God as a general blessing to mankind. The imperial edict

also was everywhere published, whereby those who had been wrongfully deprived of their estates were permitted again to enjoy their own, while those who had unjustly suffered exile were recalled to their homes. Moreover, he freed from imprisonment, and from every kind of danger and fear, those who, by reason of the tyrant's cruelty, had been subject to these sufferings.

Chapter XLII. *The Honors Conferred Upon Bishops, and the Building of Churches.*

The emperor also personally inviting the society of God's ministers, distinguished them with the highest possible respect and honor, showing them favor in deed and word as persons consecrated to the service of his God. Accordingly, they were admitted to his table, though mean in their attire and outward appearance; yet not so in his estimation, since he thought he saw not the man as seen by the vulgar eye, but the God in him. He made them also his companions in travel, believing that He whose servants they were would thus help him. Besides this, he gave from his own private resources costly benefactions to the churches of God, both enlarging and heightening the sacred edifices,[90] and embellishing the august sanctuaries[91] of the church with abundant offerings.

Chapter XLIII. *Constantine's Liberality to the Poor.*

He likewise distributed money largely to those who were in need, and besides these showing himself philanthropist and benefactor even to the heathen, who had no claim on him;[92] and even for the beggars in the forum, miserable and shiftless, he provided, not with money only, or necessary food, but also decent clothing. But in the case of those who had once been prosperous, and had experienced a reverse of circumstances, his aid was still more lavishly bestowed. On such persons, in a truly royal

spirit, he conferred magnificent benefactions; giving grants of land to some, and honoring others with various dignities. Orphans of the unfortunate he cared for as a father, while he relieved the destitution of widows, and cared for them with special solicitude. Nay, he even gave virgins, left unprotected by their parents' death, in marriage to wealthy men with whom he was personally acquainted. But this he did after first bestowing on the brides such portions as it was fitting they should bring to the communion of marriage.[93] In short, as the sun, when he rises upon the earth, liberally imparts his rays of light to all, so did Constantine, proceeding at early dawn from the imperial palace, and rising as it were with the heavenly luminary, impart the rays of his own beneficence to all who came into his presence. It was scarcely possible to be near him without receiving some benefit, nor did it ever happen that any who had expected to obtain his assistance were disappointed in their hope.[94]

Chapter XLIV. *How He Was Present at the Synods of Bishops.*

Such, then, was his general character towards all. But he exercised a peculiar care over the church of God: and whereas, in the several provinces there were some who differed from each other in judgment, he, like some general bishop constituted by God, convened synods of his ministers. Nor did he disdain to be present and sit with them in their assembly, but bore a share in their deliberations, ministering to all that pertained to the peace of God. He took his seat, too, in the midst of them, as an individual amongst many, dismissing his guards and soldiers, and all whose duty it was to defend his person; but protected by the fear of God, and surrounded by the guardianship of his faithful friends. Those whom he saw inclined to a sound judgment, and exhibiting a

calm and conciliatory temper, received his high approbation, for he evidently delighted in a general harmony of sentiment; while he regarded the unyielding wills aversion.[95]

Chapter XLV. *His Forbearance with Unreasonable Men.*

Moreover he endured with patience some who were exasperated against himself, directing them in mild and gentle terms to control themselves, and not be turbulent. And some of these respected his admonitions, and desisted; but as to those who proved incapable of sound judgment, he left them entirely at the disposal of God, and never himself desired harsh measures against any one. Hence it naturally happened that the disaffected in Africa reached such a pitch of violence as even to venture on overt acts of audacity;[96] some evil spirit, as it seems probable, being jealous of the present great prosperity, and impelling these men to atrocious deeds, that he might excite the emperor's anger against them. He gained nothing, however, by this malicious conduct; for the emperor laughed at these proceedings, and declared their origin to be from the evil one; inasmuch as these were not the actions of sober persons, but of lunatics or demoniacs; who should be pitied rather than punished; since to punish madmen is as great folly as to sympathize with their condition is supreme philanthropy.[97]

Chapter XLVI. *Victories Aver the Barbarians.*

Thus the emperor in all his actions honored God, the Controller of all things, and exercised an unwearied[98] oversight over His churches. And God requited him, by subduing all barbarous nations under his feet, so that he was able everywhere to raise trophies over his enemies: and He proclaimed him as conqueror to all mankind, and made him a terror to his adversaries: not indeed that this was his natural character, since he was rather the

meekest, and gentlest, and most benevolent of men.

Chapter XLVII. *Death of Maximin,*[99] *Who Had Attempted a Conspiracy, and of Others Whom Constantine Detected by Divine Revelation.*

While he was thus engaged, the second of those who had resigned the throne, being detected in a treasonable conspiracy, suffered a most ignominious death. He was the first whose pictures, statues, and all similar marks of honor and distinction were everywhere destroyed, on the ground of his crimes and impiety. After him others also of the same family were discovered in the act of forming secret plots against the emperor; all their intentions being miraculously revealed by God through visions to His servant.

For he frequently vouchsafed to him manifestations of himself, the Divine presence appearing to him in a most marvelous manner, and according to him manifold intimations of future events. Indeed, it is impossible to express in words the indescribable wonders of Divine grace which God was pleased to vouchsafe to His servant. Surrounded by these, he passed the rest of his life in security, rejoicing in the affection of his subjects, rejoicing too because he saw all beneath his government leading contented lives; but above all delighted at the flourishing condition of the churches of God.

Chapter XLVIII. *Celebration of Constantine's Decennalia.*

While he was thus circumstanced, he completed the tenth year of his reign. On this occasion he ordered the celebration of general festivals, and offered prayers of thanksgiving to God, the King of all, as sacrifices without flame or smoke.[100] And from this employment he derived much pleasure: not so from the tidings he received of the ravages committed in the Eastern provinces.

Chapter XLIX. *How Licinius Oppressed the*

East.

For he was informed that in that quarter a certain savage beast was besetting both the church of God and the other inhabitants of the provinces, owing, as it were, to the efforts of the evil spirit to produce effects quite contrary to the deeds of the pious emperor: so that the Roman empire, divided into two parts, seemed to all men to resemble night and day; since darkness overspread the provinces of the East, while the brightest day illumined the inhabitants of the other portion. And whereas the latter were receiving manifold blessings at the hand of God, the sight of these blessings proved intolerable to that envy which hates all good, as well as to the tyrant who afflicted the other division of the empire; and who, notwithstanding that his government was prospering, and he had been honored by a marriage connection[101] with so great an emperor as Constantine, yet cared not to follow the steps of that pious prince, but strove rather to imitate the evil purposes and practice of the impious; and chose to adopt the course of those whose ignominious end he had seen with his own eyes, rather than to maintain amicable relations with him who was his superior.[102]

Chapter L. *How Licinius Attempted a Conspiracy Against Constantine.*

Accordingly he engaged in an implacable war against his benefactor, altogether regardless of the laws of friendship, the obligation of oaths, the ties of kindred, and already existing treaties. For the most benignant emperor had given him a proof of sincere affection in bestowing on him the hand of his sister, thus granting him the privilege of a place in family relationship and his own ancient imperial descent, and investing him also with the rank and dignity of his colleague in the empire.[103] But the other took the very opposite course, employing himself in machinations against his superior,

and devising various means to repay his benefactor with injuries. At first, pretending friendship, he did all things by guile and treachery, expecting thus to succeed in concealing his designs; but God enabled his servant to detect the schemes thus devised in darkness. Being discovered, however, in his first attempts, he had recourse to fresh frauds; at one time pretending friendship, at another claiming the protection of solemn treaties. Then suddenly violating every engagement, and again beseeching pardon by embassies, yet after all shamefully violating his word, he at last declared open war, and with desperate infatuation resolved thenceforward to carry arms against God himself, whose worshiper he knew the emperor to be.

Chapter LI. *Intrigues of Licinius Against the Bishops, and His Prohibition of Synods.*

And at first he made secret enquiry respecting the ministers of God subject to his dominion, who had never, indeed, in any respect offended against his government, in order to bring false accusations against them. And when he found no ground of accusation, and had no real ground of objection against them, he next enacted a law, to the effect that the bishops should never on any account hold communication with each other, nor should any one of them absent himself on a visit to a neighboring church; nor, lastly, should the holding of synods, or councils for the consideration of affairs of common interest,[104] be permitted. Now this was clearly a pretext for displaying his malice against us. For we were compelled either to violate the law, and thus be amenable to punishment, or else, by compliance with its injunctions, to nullify the statutes of the Church; inasmuch as it is impossible to bring important questions to a satisfactory adjustment, except by means of synods. In other cases also this God-hater, being determined to act contrary to the God-loving

prince, enacted such things. For whereas the one assembled the priests of God in order to honor them, and to promote peace and unity of judgment; the other, whose object it was to destroy everything that was good, used all his endeavors to destroy the general harmony.

Chapter LII. *Banishment of the Christians, and Confiscation of Their Property.*

And whereas Constantine, the friend of God, had granted to His worshipers freedom of access to the imperial palaces; this enemy of God, in a spirit the very reverse of this, expelled thence all Christians subject to his authority. He banished those who had proved themselves his most faithful and devoted servants, and compelled others, on whom he had himself conferred honor and distinction as a reward for their former eminent services, to the performance of menial offices as slaves to others; and at length, being bent on seizing the property of all as a windfall for himself, he even threatened with death those who professed the Saviour's name. Moreover, being himself of a nature hopelessly debased by sensuality, and degraded by the continual practice of adultery and other shameless vices, he assumed his own worthless character as a specimen of human nature generally, and denied that the virtue of chastity and continence existed among men.

Chapter LIII. *Edict that Women Should Not Meet with the Men in the Churches.*

Accordingly he passed a second law, which enjoined that men should not appear in company with women in the houses of prayer, and forbade women to attend the sacred schools of virtue, or to receive instruction from the bishops, directing the appointment of women to be teachers of their own sex. These regulations being received with general ridicule, he devised other, means for effecting the ruin of the churches. He ordered that the

usual congregations of the people should be held in the open country outside the gates, alleging that the open air without the city was far more suitable for a multitude than the houses of prayer within the walls.

Chapter LIV. *That Those Who Refuse to Sacrifice are to Be Dismissed from Military Service, and Those in Prison Not to Be Fed.*

Failing, however, to obtain obedience in this respect also, at length he threw off the mask, and gave orders that those who held military commissions in the several cities of the empire should be deprived of their respective commands, in case of their refusal to offer sacrifices to the demons. Accordingly the forces of the authorities in every province suffered the loss of those who worshiped God; and he too who had decreed this order suffered loss, in that he thus deprived himself of the prayers of pious men. And why should I still further mention how he directed that no one should obey the dictates of common humanity by distributing food to those who were pining in prisons, or should even pity the captives who perished with hunger; in short, that no one should perform a virtuous action, and that those whose natural feelings impelled them to sympathize with their fellow-creatures should be prohibited from doing them a single kindness? Truly this was the most utterly shameless and scandalous of all laws, and one which surpassed the worst depravity of human nature: a law which inflicted on those who showed mercy the same penalties as on those who were the objects of their compassion, and visited the exercise of mere humanity with the severest punishments.[105]

Chapter LV. *The Lawless Conduct and Covetousness of Licinius.*

Such were the ordinances of Licinius. But why should I enumerate his innovations respecting marriage, or those concerning the dying, whereby he presumed to abrogate

the ancient and wisely established laws of the Romans, and to introduce certain barbarous and cruel institutions in their stead, inventing a thousand pretenses for oppressing his subjects? Hence it was that he devised a new method of measuring land, by which he reckoned the smallest portion at more than its actual dimensions, from an insatiable desire of acquisition. Hence too he registered the names of country residents who were now no more, and had long been numbered with the dead, procuring to himself by this expedient a shameful gain. His meanness was unlimited and his rapacity insatiable. So that when he had filled all his treasuries with gold, and silver, and boundless wealth, he bitterly bewailed his poverty, and suffered as it were the torments of Tantalus. But why should I mention how many innocent persons he punished with exile; how much property he confiscated; how many men of noble birth and estimable character he imprisoned, whose wives he handed over to be basely insulted by his profligate slaves, and to how many married women and virgins he himself offered violence, though already feeling the infirmities of age? I need not enlarge on these subjects, since the enormity of his last actions causes the former to appear trifling and of little moment.[106]

Chapter LVI. *At Length He Undertakes to Raise a Persecution.*

For the final efforts of his fury appeared in his open hostility to the churches, and he directed his attacks against the bishops themselves, whom he regarded as his worst adversaries, bearing special enmity to those men whom the great and pious emperor treated as his friends. Accordingly he spent on us the utmost of his fury, and, being transported beyond the bounds of reason, he paused not to reflect on the example of those who had persecuted the Christians before him, nor of those whom

he himself had been raised up to punish and destroy for their impious deeds: nor did he heed the facts of which he had been himself a witness, though he had seen with his own eyes the chief originator of these our calamities (whoever he was), smitten by the stroke of the Divine scourge.

Chapter LVII. *That Maximian,*[107] *Brought Low by a Fistulous Ulcer with Worms, Issued an Edict in Favor of the Christians.*

For whereas this man had commenced the attack on the churches, and had been the first to pollute his soul with the blood of just and godly men, a judgment from God overtook him, which at first affected his body, but eventually extended itself to his soul. For suddenly an abscess appeared in the secret parts of his person, followed by a deeply seated fistulous ulcer; and these diseases fastened with incurable virulence on the intestines, which swarmed with a vast multitude of worms, and emitted a pestilential odor. Besides, his entire person had become loaded, through gluttonous excess, with an enormous quantity of fat, and this, being now in a putrescent state, is said to have presented to all who approached him an intolerable and dreadful spectacle. Having, therefore, to struggle against such sufferings, at length, though late, he came to a realization of his past crimes against the Church; and, confessing his sins before God, he put a stop to the persecution of the Christians, and hastened to issue imperial edicts and rescripts for the rebuilding of their churches, at the same time enjoining them to perform their customary worship, and to offer up prayers on his behalf.[108]

Chapter LVIII. *That Maximin, Who Had Persecuted the Christians, Was Compelled to Fly, and Conceal Himself in the Disguise of a Slave.*

Such was the punishment which he underwent who had commenced the persecution. He,[109] however, of whom we are now speaking, who had been a witness of these things, and known them by his own actual experience, all at once banished the remembrance of them from his mind, and reflected neither on the punishment of the first, nor the divine judgment which had been executed on the second persecutor.[110] The latter had indeed endeavored to outstrip his predecessor in the career of crime, and prided himself on the invention of new tortures for us. Fire nor sword, nor piercing with nails, nor yet wild beasts or the depths of the sea sufficed him. In addition to all these, he discovered a new mode of punishment, and issued an edict directing that their eyesight should be destroyed. So that numbers, not of men only, but of women and children, after being deprived of the sight of their eyes, and the use of the joints of their feet, by mutilation or cauterization, were consigned in this condition to the painful labor of the mines. Hence it was that this tyrant also was overtaken not long after by the righteous judgment of God, at a time when, confiding in the aid of the demons whom he worshiped as gods, and relying on the countless multitudes of his troops, he had ventured to engage in battle. For, feeling himself on that occasion destitute of all hope in God, he threw from him the imperial dress which so ill became him, hid himself with unmanly timidity in the crowd around him, and sought safety in flight.[111]

He afterwards lurked about the fields and villages in the habit of a slave, hoping he should thus be effectually concealed. He had not, however, eluded the mighty and all-searching eye of God: for even while he was expecting to pass the residue of his days in security, he fell prostrate, smitten by God's fiery dart, and his whole body consumed by the stroke of Divine vengeance; so

that all trace of the original lineaments of his person was lost, and nothing remained to him but dry bones and a skeleton-like appearance.

Chapter LIX. *That Maximin, Blinded by Disease, Issued an Edict in Favor of the Christians*.

And still the stroke of God continued heavy upon him, so that his eyes protruded and fell from their sockets, leaving him quite blind: and thus he suffered, by a most righteous retribution, the very same punishment which he had been the first to devise for the martyrs of God. At length, however, surviving even these sufferings, he too implored pardon of the God of the Christians, and confessed his impious fighting against God: he too recanted, as the former persecutor had done; and by laws and ordinances explicitly acknowledged his error in worshiping those whom he had accounted gods, declaring that he now knew, by positive experience, that the God of the Christians was the only true God. These were facts which Licinius had not merely received on the testimony of others, but of which he had himself had personal knowledge: and yet, as though his understanding had been obscured by some dark cloud of error, persisted in the same evil course.

Book II.

Chapter I. *Secret Persecution by Licinius, Who Causes Some Bishops to Be Put to Death at Amasia of Pontus*.

In this manner, he of whom we have spoken continued to rush headlong towards that destruction which awaits the enemies of God; and once more, with a fatal emulation of their example whose ruin he had himself witnessed as the consequence of their impious conduct, he re-kindled the persecution of the Christians, like a long-extinguished fire, and fanned the unhallowed flame to a fiercer height

than any who had gone before him.

At first, indeed, though breathing fury and threatenings against God, like some savage beast of prey, or some crooked and wriggling serpent, he dared not, from fear of Constantine, openly level his attacks against the churches of God subject to his dominion; but dissembled the virulence of his malice, and endeavored by secret and limited measures to compass the death of the bishops, the most eminent of whom he found means to remove, through charges laid against them by the governors of the several provinces. And the manner in which they suffered had in it something strange, and hitherto unheard of. At all events, the barbarities perpetrated at Amasia of Pontus surpassed every known excess of cruelty.

Chapter II. *Demolition of Churches, and Butchery of the Bishops.*

For in that city some of the churches, for the second time since the commencement of the persecutions, were leveled with the ground, and others were closed by the governors of the several districts, in order to prevent any who frequented them from assembling together, or rendering due worship to God. For he by whose orders these outrages were committed was too conscious of his own crimes to expect that these services were performed with any view to his benefit, and was convinced that all we did, and all our endeavors to obtain the favor of God, were on Constantine's behalf.

These servile governors[1] then, feeling assured that such a course would be pleasing to the impious tyrant, subjected the most distinguished prelates of the churches to capital punishment. Accordingly, men who had been guilty of no crime were led away, without cause[2] punished like murderers: and some suffered a new kind of death, having their bodies cut piecemeal; and, after this cruel punishment, more horrible than any named in tragedy,

being cast, as a food to fishes, into the depths of the sea. The result of these horrors was again, as before, the flight of pious men, and once more the fields and deserts received the worshipers of God. The tyrant, having thus far succeeded in his object, he farther determined to raise a general persecution of the Christians:[3] and he would have accomplished his purpose, nor could anything have hindered him from carrying his resolution into effect, had not he who defends his own anticipated the coming evil, and by his special guidance conducted his servant Constantine to this part of the empire, causing him to shine forth as a brilliant light in the midst of the darkness and gloomy night.

Chapter III. *How Constantine Was Stirred in Behalf of the Christians Thus in Danger of Persecution.*

He, perceiving the evils of which he had heard to be no longer tolerable, took wise counsel, and tempering the natural clemency of his character with a certain measure of severity, hastened to succor those who were thus grievously oppressed. For he judged that it would rightly be deemed a pious and holy task to secure, by the removal of an individual, the safety of the greater part of the human race. He judged too, that if he listened to the dictates of clemency only, and bestowed his pity on one utterly unworthy of it, this would, on the one hand, confer no real benefit on a man whom nothing would induce to abandon his evil practices, and whose fury against his subjects would only be likely to increase; [4] while, on the other hand, those who suffered from his oppression would thus be forever deprived of all hope of deliverance.

Influenced by these reflections, the emperor resolved without farther delay to extend a protecting hand to those who had fallen into such an extremity of distress. He

accordingly made the usual warlike preparations, and assembled his whole forces, both of horse and foot. But before them all was carried the standard which I have before described, as the symbol of his full confidence in God.

Chapter IV. *That Constantine Prepared Himself for the War by Prayer: Licinius by the Practice of Divination.*

He took with him also the priests of God, feeling well assured that now, if ever, he stood in need of the efficacy of prayer, and thinking it right that they should constantly be near and about his person, as most trusty guardians of the soul.

Now, as soon as the tyrant understood that Constantine's victories over his enemies were secured to him by no other means than the cooperation of God, and that the persons above alluded to were continually with him and about his person; and besides this, that the symbol of the salutary passion preceded both the emperor himself and his whole army; he regarded these precautions with ridicule (as might be expected), at the same time mocking and reviling the emperor with blasphemous words.

On the other hand, he gathered round himself Egyptian diviners and soothsayers, with sorcerers and enchanters, and the priests and prophets of those whom he imagined to be gods. He then, after offering the sacrifices which he thought the occasion demanded, enquired how far he might reckon on a successful termination of the war. They replied with one voice, that he would unquestionably be victorious over his enemies, and triumphant in the war: and the oracles everywhere held out to him the same prospect in copious and elegant verses. The soothsayers certified him of favorable omens from the flight of birds; the priests[5] declared the same to be indicated by the motion of the entrails of their victims.

Elevated, therefore, by these fallacious assurances, he boldly advanced at the head of his army, and prepared for battle.

Chapter V. *What Licinius, While Sacrificing in a Grove, Said Concerning Idols, and Concerning Christ.*

And when he was now ready to engage, he desired the most approved of his body-guard[6] and his most valued friends to meet him in one of the places which they consider sacred. It was a well-watered and shady grove, and in it were several marble statues of those whom he accounted to be gods. After lighting tapers and performing the usual sacrifices in honor of these, he is said to have delivered the following speech:

"Friends and fellow-soldiers! These are our country's gods, and these we honor with a worship derived from our remotest ancestors. But he who leads the army now opposed to us has proved false to the religion of his forefathers, and adopted atheistic sentiments, honoring in his infatuation some strange and unheard-of Deity, with whose despicable standard he now disgraces his army, and confiding in whose aid he has taken up arms, and is now advancing, not so much against *us* as against those very gods whom he has forsaken. However, the present occasion shall prove which of us is mistaken in his judgment, and shall decide between our gods and those whom our adversaries profess to honor. For either it will declare the victory to be ours, and so most justly evince that our gods are the true saviours and helpers; or else, if this God of Constantine's, who comes we know not whence, shall prove superior to our deities (who are many, and in point of numbers, at least, have the advantage), let no one henceforth doubt which god he ought to worship, but attach himself at once to the superior power, and ascribe to him the honors of the

victory. Suppose, then, this strange God, whom we now regard with ridicule, should really prove victorious; then indeed we must acknowledge and give him honor, and so bid a long farewell to those for whom we light our tapers in vain. But if our own gods triumph (as they undoubtedly will), then, as soon as we have secured the present victory, let us prosecute the war without delay against these despisers of the gods."

Such were the words he addressed to those then present, as reported not long after to the writer of this history by some who heard them spoken.[7] And as soon as he had concluded his speech, he gave orders to his forces to commence the attack.

Chapter VI. *An Apparition Seen in the Cities Subject to Licinius, as of Constantine's Troops Passing Through Them.*

While these things were taking place a supernatural appearance is said to have been observed in the cities subject to the tyrant's rule. Different detachments of Constantine's army seemed to present themselves to the view, marching at noonday through these cities, as though they had obtained the victory. In reality, not a single soldier was anywhere present at the time, and yet this appearance was seen through the agency of a divine and superior power, and foreshadowed what was shortly coming to pass. For as soon as the armies were ready to engage, he who had broken through the ties of friendly alliance[8] was the first to commence the battle; on which Constantine, calling on the name of "God the Supreme Saviour," and giving this as the watchword to his soldiers, overcame him in this first conflict: and not long after in a second battle he gained a still more important and decisive victory, the salutary trophy preceding the ranks of his army.

Chapter VII. *That Victory Everywhere*

Followed the Presence of the Standard of the Cross in Battle.

Indeed, wherever this appeared, the enemy soon fled before his victorious troops. And the emperor perceiving this, whenever he saw any part of his forces hard pressed, gave orders that the salutary trophy should be moved in that direction, like some triumphant charm[9] against disasters: at which the combatants were divinely inspired, as it were, with fresh strength and courage, and immediate victory was the result.

Chapter VIII. *That Fifty Men Were Selected to Carry the Cross.*

Accordingly, he selected those of his bodyguard who were most distinguished for personal strength, valor, and piety, and entrusted them with the sole care and defense of the standard. There were thus no less than fifty men whose only duty was to surround and vigilantly defend the standard, which they carried each in turn on their shoulders. These circumstances were related to the writer of this narrative by the emperor himself in his leisure moments, long after the occurrence of the events: and he added another incident well worthy of being recorded.

Chapter IX. *That One of the Cross-Bearers, Who Fled from His Post, Was Slain: While Another, Who Faithfully Stood His Ground, Was Preserved.*

For he said that once, during the very heat of an engagement, a sudden tumult and panic attacked his army, which threw the soldier who then bore the standard into an agony of fear, so that he handed it over to another, in order to secure his own escape from the battle. As soon, however, as his comrade had received it, and he had withdrawn, and resigned all charge of the standard, he was struck in the belly by a dart, which took his life. Thus he paid the penalty of his cowardice and

unfaithfulness, and lay dead on the spot: but the other, who had taken his place as the bearer of the salutary standard, found it to be the safeguard of his life. For though he was assailed by a continual shower of darts, the bearer remained unhurt, the staff of the standard receiving every weapon. It was indeed a truly marvelous circumstance, that the enemies' darts all fell within and remained in the slender circumference of this spear, and thus saved the standard-bearer from death; so that none of those engaged in this service ever received a wound. This story is none of mine, but for this,[10] too, I am indebted to the emperor's own authority, who related it in my hearing along with other matters. And now, having thus through the power of God secured these first victories, he put his forces in motion and continued his onward march.

Chapter X. *Various Battles, and Constantine's Victories.*

The van, however, of the enemy, unable to resist the emperor's first assault, threw down their arms, and prostrated themselves at his feet. All these he spared, rejoicing to save human life. But there were others who still continued in arms, and engaged in battle. These the emperor endeavored to conciliate by friendly overtures, but when these were not accepted he ordered his army to commence the attack. On this they immediately turned and betook themselves to flight; and some were overtaken and slain according to the laws of war, while others fell on each other in the confusion of their flight, and perished by the swords of their comrades.

Chapter XI. *Flight, and Magic Arts of Licinius.*

In these circumstances their commander, finding himself bereft of the aid of his followers,[11] having lost his lately numerous array, both of regular and allied forces, having proved, too, by experience, how vain his confidence had

been in those whom he thought to be gods, ignominiously took to flight, by which indeed he effected his escape, and secured his personal safety, for the pious emperor had forbidden his soldiers to follow him too closely,[12] and thus allowed him an opportunity for escape. And this he did in the hope that he might hereafter, on conviction of the desperate state of his affairs, be induced to abandon his insane and presumptuous ambition, and return to sounder reason. So Constantine, in his excessive humanity, thought and was willing patiently to bear past injuries, and extend his forgiveness to one who so ill deserved it; but Licinius, far from renouncing his evil practices, still added crime to crime, and ventured on more daring atrocities than ever. Nay, once more tampering with the detestable arts of magic, he again was presumptuous: so that it might well be said of him, as it was of the Egyptian tyrant of old, that God had hardened his heart.[13]

Chapter XII. *How Constantine, After Praying in His Tabernacle, Obtained the Victory.*

But while Licinius, giving himself up to these impieties, rushed blindly towards the gulf of destruction, the emperor on the other hand, when he saw that he must meet his enemies in a second battle, devoted the intervening time to his Saviour. He pitched the tabernacle of the cross[14] outside and at a distance from his camp, and there passed his time in a pure and holy manner, offering up prayers to God; following thus the example of his ancient prophet, of whom the sacred oracles testify, that he pitched the tabernacle without the camp.[15] He was attended only by a few, whose faith and pious devotion he highly esteemed. And this custom he continued to observe whenever he meditated an engagement with the enemy. For he was deliberate in his measures, the better to insure safety, and desired in

everything to be directed by divine counsel. And making earnest supplications to God, he was always honored after a little with a manifestation of his presence. And then, as if moved by a divine impulse, he would rush from the tabernacle, and suddenly give orders to his army to move at once without delay, and on the instant to draw their swords. On this they would immediately commence the attack, fight vigorously, so as with incredible celerity to secure the victory, and raise trophies of victory over their enemies.

Chapter XIII. *His Humane Treatment of Prisoners.*

Thus the emperor and his army had long been accustomed to act, whenever there was a prospect of an engagement; for his God was ever present to his thoughts, and he desired to do everything according to his will, and conscientiously to avoid any wanton sacrifice of human life. He was anxious thus for the preservation not only of his own subjects, but even of his enemies. Accordingly he directed his victorious troops to spare the lives of their prisoners, admonishing them, as human beings, not to forget the claims of their common nature. And whenever he saw the passions of his soldiery excited beyond control, he repressed their fury by a largess of money, rewarding every man who saved the life of an enemy with a certain weight of gold. And the emperor's own sagacity led him to discover this inducement to spare human life, so that great numbers even of the barbarians were thus saved, and owed their lives to the emperor's gold.

Chapter XIV. *A Farther Mention of His Prayers in the Tabernacle.*

Now these, and a thousand such acts as these, were familiarly and habitually done by the emperor. And on the present occasion he retired, as his custom was before

battle, to the privacy of his tabernacle, and there employed his time in prayer to God. Meanwhile he strictly abstained from anything like ease, or luxurious living, and disciplined himself by fasting and bodily mortification, imploring the favor of God by supplication and prayer, that he might obtain his concurrence and aid, and be ready to execute whatever he might be pleased to suggest to his thoughts. In short, he exercised a vigilant care over all alike, and interceded with God as much for the safety of his enemies as for that of his own subjects.

Chapter XV. *Treacherous Friendship, and Idolatrous Practices of Licinius.*

And inasmuch as he who had lately fled before him now dissembled his real sentiments, and again petitioned for a renewal of friendship and alliance, the emperor thought fit, on certain conditions, to grant his request,[16] in the hope that such a measure might be expedient, and generally advantageous to the community. Licinius, however, while he pretended a ready submission to the terms prescribed, and attested his sincerity by oaths, at this very time was secretly engaged in collecting a military force, and again meditated war and strife, inviting even the barbarians to join his standard,[17] and he began also to look about him for other gods, having been deceived by those in whom he had hitherto trusted. And, without bestowing a thought on what he had himself publicly spoken on the subject of false deities, or choosing to acknowledge that God who had fought on the side of Constantine, he made himself ridiculous by seeking for a multitude of new gods.

Chapter XVI. *How Licinius Counseled His Soldiers Not to Attack the Standard of the Cross.*

Having now learned by experience the Divine and mysterious power which resided in the salutary trophy,

by means of which Constantine's army had become habituated to victory, he admonished his soldiers never to direct their attack against this standard, nor even incautiously to allow their eyes to rest upon it; assuring them that it possessed a terrible power, and was especially hostile to him; so that they would do well carefully to avoid any collision with it. And now, having given these directions, he prepared for a decisive conflict with him whose humanity prompted him still to hesitate, and to postpone the fate which he foresaw awaited his adversary. The enemy, however, confident in the aid of a multitude of gods, advanced to the attack with a powerful array of military force, preceded by certain images of the dead, and lifeless statues, as their defense. On the other side, the emperor, secure in the armor of godliness, opposed to the numbers of the enemy the salutary and life-giving sign, as at once a terror to the foe, and a protection from every harm. And for a while he paused, and preserved at first the attitude of forbearance, from respect to the treaty of peace to which he had given his sanction, that he might not be the first to commence the contest.

Chapter XVII. *Constantine's Victory.*

But as soon as he perceived that his adversaries persisted in their resolution, and were already drawing their swords, he gave free scope to his indignation, and by a single charge[18] overthrew in a moment the entire body of the enemy, thus triumphing at once over them and their gods.

Chapter XVIII. *Death of Licinius, and Celebration of the Event.*

He then proceeded to deal with this adversary of God and his followers according to the laws of war, and consign them to fitting punishment. Accordingly the tyrant himself, and they whose counsels had supported him in

his impiety, were together subjected to the just punishment of death. After this, those who had so lately been deceived by their vain confidence in false deities, acknowledged with unfeigned sincerity the God of Constantine, and openly professed their belief in him as the true and only God.

Chapter XIX. *Rejoicings and Festivities.*

And now, the impious being thus removed, the sun once more shone brightly after the gloomy cloud of tyrannic power. Each separate portion of the Roman dominion became blended with the rest; the Eastern nations united with those of the West, and the whole body of the Roman empire was graced as it were by its head in the person of a single and supreme ruler, whose sole authority pervaded the whole. Now too the bright rays of the light of godliness gladdened the days of those who had heretofore been sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. Past sorrows were no more remembered, for all united in celebrating the praises of the victorious prince, and avowed their recognition of his preserver as the only true God. Thus he whose character shone with all the virtues of piety, the emperor Victor, for he had himself adopted this name as a most fitting appellation to express the victory which God had granted him over all who hated or opposed him,[19] assumed the dominion of the East, and thus singly governed the Roman empire, re-united, as in former times, under one head. Thus, as he was the first to proclaim to all the sole sovereignty of God, so he himself, as sole sovereign of the Roman world, extended his authority over the whole human race. Every apprehension of those evils under the pressure of which all had suffered was now removed; men whose heads had drooped in sorrow now regarded each other with smiling countenances, and looks expressive of their inward joy. With processions and hymns of praise they

first of all, as they were told, ascribed the supreme sovereignty to God, as in truth the King of kings; and then with continued acclamations rendered honor to the victorious emperor, and the Caesars, his most discreet and pious sons. The former afflictions were forgotten, and all past impieties forgiven: while with the enjoyment of present happiness was mingled the expectation of continued blessings in the future.

Chapter XX. *Constantine's Enactments in Favor of the Confessors*.

Moreover, the emperor's edicts, permeated with his humane spirit, were published among us also, as they had been among the inhabitants of the other division of the empire; and his laws, which breathed a spirit of piety toward God, gave promise of manifold blessings, since they secured many advantages to his provincial subjects in every nation, and at the same time prescribed measures suited to the exigencies of the churches of God. For first of all they recalled those who, in consequence of their refusal to join in idol worship, had been driven to exile, or ejected from their homes by the governors of their respective provinces. In the next place, they relieved from their burdens those who for the same reason had been adjudged to serve in the civil courts, and ordained restitution to be made to any who had been deprived of property. They too, who in the time of trial had signalized themselves by fortitude of soul in the cause of God, and had therefore been condemned to the painful labor of the mines, or consigned to the solitude of islands, or compelled to toil in the public works, all received an immediate release from these burdens; while others, whose religious constancy had cost them the forfeiture of their military rank, were vindicated by the emperor's generosity from this dishonor: for he granted them the alternative either of resuming their rank, and

enjoying their former privileges, or, in the event of their preferring a more settled life, of perpetual exemption from all service. Lastly, all who had been compelled by way of disgrace and insult to serve in the employments of women,[20] he likewise freed with the rest.

Chapter XXI. *His Laws Concerning Martyrs, and Concerning Ecclesiastical Property*.

Such were the benefits secured by the emperor's written mandates to the persons of those who had thus suffered for the faith, and his laws made ample provision for their property also.

With regard to those holy martyrs of God who had laid down their lives in the confession of His name, he directed that their estates should be enjoyed by their nearest kindred; and, in default of any of these, that the right of inheritance should be vested in the churches. Farther, whatever property had been consigned to other parties from the treasury, whether in the way of sale or gift, together with that retained in the treasury itself, the generous mandate of the emperor directed should be restored to the original owners. Such benefits did his bounty, thus widely diffused, confer on the Church of God.

Chapter XXII. *How He Won the Favor of the People.*

But his munificence bestowed still further and more numerous favors on the heathen peoples and the other nations of his empire. So that the inhabitants of our [Eastern] regions, who had heard of the privileges experienced in the opposite portion of the empire, and had blessed the fortunate recipients of them, and longed for the enjoyment of a similar lot for themselves, now with one consent proclaimed their own happiness, when they saw themselves in possession of all these blessings; and confessed that the appearance of such a monarch to

the human race was indeed a marvelous event, and such as the world's history had never yet recorded. Such were their sentiments.

Chapter XXIII. *That He Declared God to Be the Author of His Prosperity: and Concerning His Rescripts.*

And now that, through the powerful aid of God his Saviour, all nations owned their subjection to the emperor's authority, he openly proclaimed to all the name of Him to whose bounty he owed all his blessings, and declared that He, and not himself, was the author of his past victories. This declaration, written both in the Latin and Greek languages, he caused to be transmitted through every province of the empire. Now the excellence of his style of expression[21] may be known from a perusal of his letters themselves which were two in number; one addressed to the churches of God; the other to the heathen population in the several cities of the empire. The latter of these I think it well to insert here as connected with my present subject, in order on the one hand that a copy of this document may be recorded as matter of history, and thus preserved to posterity, and on the other that it may serve to confirm the truth of my present narrative. It is taken from an authentic copy of the imperial statute in my own possession and the signature in the emperor's own handwriting attaches as it were the impress of truth to the statement I have made.

Chapter XXIV. *Law of Constantine Respecting Piety Towards God, and the Christian Religion.*[22]

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to the inhabitants of the province of Palestine.

"To all who entertain just and sound sentiments respecting the character of the Supreme Being, it has long been most clearly evident, and beyond the

possibility of doubt, how vast a difference there has ever been between those who maintain a careful observance of the hallowed duties of the Christian religion, and those who treat this religion with hostility or contempt. But at this present time, we may see by stilt more manifest proofs, and still more decisive instances, both how unreasonable it were to question this truth, and how mighty is the power of the Supreme God: since it appears that they who faithfully observe His holy laws, and shrink from the transgression of His commandments, are rewarded with abundant blessings, and are endued with well-grounded hope as well as ample power for the accomplishment of their undertakings. On the other hand, they who have cherished impious sentiments have experienced results corresponding to their evil choice. For how is it to be expected that any blessing would be obtained by one who neither desired to acknowledge nor duly to worship that God who is the source of all blessing? Indeed, facts themselves are a confirmation of what I say.

Chapter XXV. *An Illustration from Ancient Times.*

"For certainly any one who will mentally retrace the course of events from the earliest period down to the present time, and will reflect on what has occurred in past ages, will find that all who have made justice and probity the basis of their conduct, have not only carried their undertakings to a successful issue, but have gathered, as it were, a store of sweet fruit as the produce of this pleasant root. Again, whoever observes the career of those who have been bold in the practice of oppression or injustice; who have either directed their senseless fury against God himself, or have conceived no kindly feelings towards their fellow-men, but have dared to afflict them with exile, disgrace, confiscation, massacre,

or other miseries of the like kind, and all this without any sense of compunction, or wish to direct thoughts to a better course, will find that such men have received a recompense proportioned to their crimes. And these are results which might naturally and reasonably be expected to ensue?[23]

Chapter XXVI. *Of Persecuted and Persecutors.*

"For whoever have addressed themselves with integrity of purpose to any course of action, keeping the fear of God continually before their thoughts, and preserving an unwavering faith in him, without allowing present fears or dangers to outweigh their hope of future blessings-such persons, though for a season they may have experienced painful trials, have borne their afflictions lightly, being supported by the belief of greater rewards in store for them; and their character has acquired a brighter luster inproportion to the severity of their past sufferings. With regard, on the other hand, to those who have either dishonorably slighted the principles of justice, or refused to acknowledge the Supreme God themselves, and yet have dared to subject others who have faithfully maintained his worship to the most cruel insults and punishments; who have failed equally to recognize their own wretchedness in oppressing others on such grounds, and the happiness and blessing of those who preserved their devotion to God even in the midst of such sufferings: with regard, I say, to such men, many a time have their armies been slaughtered, many a time have they been put to flight; and their warlike preparations have ended in total ruin and defeat.

Chapter XXVII. *How the Persecution Became the Occasion of Calamities to the Aggressors.*

"From the causes I have described, grievous wars arose, and destructive devastations. Hence followed a scarcity

of the common necessaries of life, and a crowd of consequent miseries: hence, too, the authors of these impieties have either met a disastrous death of extreme suffering, or have dragged out an ignominious existence, and confessed it to be worse than death itself, thus receiving as it were a measure of punishment proportioned to the heinousness of their crimes.[24] For each experienced a degree of calamity according to the blind fury with which he had been led to combat, and as he thought, defeat the Divine will: so that they not only felt the pressure of the ills of this present life, but were tormented also by a most lively apprehension of punishment in the future world.[25]

Chapter XXVIII. *That God Chose Constantine to Be the Minister of Blessing.*

"And now, with such a mass of impiety oppressing the human race, and the commonwealth in danger of being utterly destroyed, as if by the agency of some pestilential disease, and therefore needing powerful and effectual aid; what was the relief, and what the remedy which the Divinity devised for these evils? (And by Divinity is meant the one who is alone and truly God, the possessor of almighty and eternal power: and surely it cannot be deemed arrogance in one who has received benefits from God, to acknowledge them in the loftiest terms of praise.) I myself, then, was the instrument whose services He chose, and esteemed suited for the accomplishment of his will. Accordingly, beginning at the remote Britannic ocean, and the regions where, according to the law of nature, the sun sinks beneath the horizon, through the aid of divine power I banished and utterly removed every form of evil which prevailed, in the hope that the human race, enlightened through my instrumentality, might be recalled to a due observance of the holy laws of God, and at the same time our most blessed faith might prosper

under the guidance of his almighty hand.

Chapter XXIX. *Constantine's Expressions of Piety Towards God; And Praise of the Confessors.*

"I Said,[26] under the guidance of his hand; for I would desire never to be forgetful of the gratitude due to his grace. Believing, therefore, that this most excellent service had been confided to me as a special gift, I proceeded as far as the regions of the East, which, being under the pressure of severer calamities, seemed to demand still more effectual remedies at my hands. At the same time I am most certainly persuaded that I myself owe my life, my every breath, in short, my very inmost and secret thoughts, entirely to the favor of the Supreme God. Now I am well aware that they who are sincere in the pursuit of the heavenly hope, and have fixed this hope in heaven itself as the peculiar and predominant principle of their lives, have no need to depend on human favor, but rather have enjoyed higher honors in proportion as they have separated themselves from the inferior and evil things of this earthly existence. Nevertheless I deem it incumbent on me to remove at once and most completely from all such persons the hard necessities laid upon them for a season, and the unjust inflictions under which they have suffered, though free from any guilt or just liability. For it would be strange indeed, that the fortitude and constancy of soul displayed by such men should be fully apparent during the reign of those whose first object it was to persecute them on account of their devotion to God, and yet that the glory of their character should not be more bright and blessed, under the administration of a prince who is His servant.

Chapter XXX. *A Law Granting Release from Exile, from Service in the Courts, and from the Confiscation of Property.*

"Let all therefore who have exchanged their country for a foreign land, because they would not abandon that reverence and faith toward God to which they had devoted themselves with their whole hearts, and have in consequence at different times been subject to the cruel sentence of the courts; together with any who have been enrolled in the registers of the public courts though in time past exempt from such office let these, I say, now render thanks to God the Liberator of all, in that they are restored to their hereditary property, and their wonted tranquility. Let those also who have been despoiled of their goods, and have hitherto passed a wretched existence, mourning under the loss of all that they possessed, once more be restored to their former homes, their families, and estates, and receive with joy the bountiful kindness of God.

Chapter XXXI. *Release Likewise Granted to Exiles in the Islands.*

"Furthermore, it is our command that all those who have been detained in the islands against their will should receive the benefit of this present provision; in order that they who rill now have been surrounded by rugged mountains and the encircling barrier of the ocean, being now set free from that gloomy and desolate solitude, may fulfill their fondest wish by revisiting their dearest friends. Those, too, who have prolonged a miserable life in the midst of abject and wretched squalor, welcoming their restoration as an unlooked-for gain, and discarding henceforth all anxious thoughts, may pass their lives with us in freedom from all fear. For that any one could live in a state of fear under our government, when we boast and believe ourselves to be the servants of God, would surely be a thing most extraordinary even to hear of, and quite incredible; and our mission is to rectify the errors of the others.

Chapter XXXII. *And to Those Ignominiously Employed in the Mines and Public Works.*

"Again, with regard to those who have been condemned either to the grievous labor of the mines, or to service in the public works, let them enjoy the sweets of leisure in place of these long-continued toils, and henceforth lead a far easier life, and more accordant with the wishes of their hearts, exchanging the incessant hardships of their tasks for quiet relaxation. And if any have forfeited the common privilege of liberty, or have unhappily suffered dishonor,[27] let them hasten back every one to the country of his nativity, and resume with becoming joy their former positions in society, from which they have been as it were separated by long residence abroad.

Chapter XXXIII. *Concerning Those Confessors Engaged in Military Service.*

"Once more, with respect to those who had previously been preferred to any military distinction, of which they were afterwards deprived, for the cruel and unjust reason that they chose rather to acknowledge their allegiance to God than to retain the rank they held; we leave them perfect liberty of choice, either to occupy their former stations, should they be content again to engage in military service, or after an honorable discharge, to live in undisturbed tranquillity. For it is fair and consistent that men who have displayed such magnanimity and fortitude in meeting the perils to which they have been exposed, should be allowed the choice either of enjoying peaceful leisure, or resuming their former rank.

Chapter XXXIV. *The Liberation of Free Persons Condemned to Labor in the Women's Apartments, or to Servitude.*

"Lastly, if any have wrongfully been deprived of the privileges of noble lineage, and subjected to a judicial sentence which has consigned them to the women's

apartments[28] and to the linen making, there to undergo a cruel and miserable labor, or reduced them to servitude for the benefit of the public treasury, without any exemption on the ground of superior birth; let such persons, resuming the honors they had previously enjoyed, and their proper dignities, henceforward exult in the blessings of liberty, and lead a glad life. Let the free man,[29] too, by some injustice and inhumanity, or even madness, made a slave, who has felt the sudden transition from liberty to bondage, and ofttimes bewailed his unwonted labors, return to his family once more a free man in virtue of this our ordinance, and seek those employments which befit a state of freedom; and let him dismiss from his remembrance those services which he found so oppressive, and which so ill became his condition.

Chapter XXXV. *Of the Inheritance of the Property of Martyrs and Confessors, Also of Those Who Had Suffered Banishment or Confiscation of Property.*

"Nor must we omit to notice those estates of which individuals have been deprived on various pretenses. For if any of those who have engaged with dauntless and resolute determination in the noble and divine conflict of martyrdom have also been stripped of their fortunes; or if the same has been the lot of the confessors, who have won for themselves the hope of eternal treasures; or if the loss of property has befallen those who were driven from their native land because they would not yield to the persecutors, and betray their faith; lastly, if any who have escaped the sentence of death have yet been despoiled of their worldly goods; we ordain that the inheritances of all such persons be transferred to their nearest kindred. And whereas the laws expressly assign this right to those most nearly related, it will be easy to ascertain to whom these

inheritances severally belong. And it is evidently reasonable that the succession in these cases should belong to those who would have stood in the place of nearest affinity, had the deceased experienced a natural death.

Chapter XXXVI. *The Church is Declared Heir of Those Who Leave No Kindred; And the Free Gifts of Such Persons Confirmed.*

"But should there be no surviving relation to succeed in due course to the property of those above-mentioned, I mean the martyrs, or confessors, or those who for some such cause have been banished from their native land; in such cases we ordain that the church locally nearest in each instance shall succeed to the inheritance. And surely it will be no wrong to the departed that that church should be their heir, for whose sake they have endured every extremity of suffering. We think it necessary to add this also, that in case any of the above-mentioned persons have donated any part of their property in the way of free gift, possession of such property shall be assured, as is reasonable, to those who have thus received it.

Chapter XXXVII. *Lands, Gardens, or Houses, But Not Actual Produce from Them, are to Be Given Back.*

"And that there may be no obscurity in this our ordinance, but every one may readily apprehend its requirements, let all men hereby know that if they are now maintaining themselves in possession of a piece of land, or a house, or garden, or anything else which had appertained to the before-mentioned persons, it will be good and advantageous for them to acknowledge the fact, and make restitution with the least possible delay. On the other hand, although it should appear that some individuals have reaped abundant profits from this unjust possession, we do not consider that justice demands the

restitution of such profits. They must, however, declare explicitly what amount of benefit they have thus derived, and from what sources, and entreat our pardon for this offense; in order that their past covetousness may in some measure be atoned for, and that the Supreme God may accept this compensation as a token of contrition, and be pleased graciously to pardon the sin.

Chapter XXXVIII. *In What Manner Requests Should Be Made for These.*

"But it is possible that those who have become masters of such property (if it be right or possible to allow them such a title) will assure us by way of apology for their conduct, that it was not in their power to abstain from this appropriation at a time when a spectacle of misery in all its forms everywhere met the view; when men were cruelly driven from their homes, slaughtered without mercy, thrust forth without remorse: when the confiscation of the property of innocent persons was a common thing, and when persecutions and property seizures were unceasing. If any defend their conduct by such reasons as these, and still persist in their avaricious temper, they shall be made sensible that such a course will bring punishment on themselves, and all the more because this correction of evil is the very characteristic of our service to the Supreme God. So that it will henceforth be dangerous to retain what dire necessity may in time past have compelled men to take; especially because it is in any case incumbent on us to discourage covetous desires, both by persuasion, and by warning examples.

Chapter XXXIX. *The Treasury Must Restore Lands, Gardens, and Houses to the Churches.*

"Nor shall the treasury itself, should it have any of the things we have spoken of, be permitted to keep them; but, without venturing as it were to raise its voice against

the holy churches, it shall justly relinquish in their favor what it has for a time unjustly retained. We ordain, therefore, that all things whatsoever which shall appear righteously to belong to the churches, whether the property consist of houses or fields and gardens, or whatever the nature of it may be, shall be restored in their full value and integrity, and with undiminished right of possession.

Chapter XL. *The Tombs of Martyrs and the Cemeteries to Be Transferred to the Possession of the Churches.*

"Again, with respect to those places which are honored in being the depositories of the remains of martyrs, and continue to be memorials of their glorious departure; how can we doubt that they rightly belong to the churches, or refrain from issuing our injunction to that effect? For surely there can be no better liberality, no labor more pleasing or profitable, than to be thus employed under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, in order that those things which have been appropriated on false pretenses by unjust and wicked men, may be restored, as justice demands, and once more secured to the holy churches.

Chapter XLI. *Those Who Have Purchased Property Belonging to the Church, or Received It as a Gift, are to Restore It.*

"And since it would be wrong in a provision intended to include all cases, to pass over those who have either procured any such property by right of purchase from the treasury, or have retained it when conveyed to them in the form of a gift; let all who have thus rashly indulged their insatiable thirst of gain be assured that, although by daring to make such purchases they have done all in their power to alienate our clemency from themselves, they shall nevertheless not fail of obtaining it, so far as is

possible and consistent with propriety in each case. So much then is determined.

Chapter XLII. *An Earnest Exhortation to Worship God.*

"And now, since it appears by the clearest and most convincing evidence, that the miseries which erewhile oppressed the entire human race are now banished from every part of the world, through the power of Almighty God, and at the same time the counsel and aid which he is pleased on many occasions to administer through our agency; it remains for all, both individually and unitedly, to observe and seriously consider how great this power and how efficacious this grace are, which have annihilated and utterly destroyed this generation, as I may call them, of most wicked and evil men; have restored joy to the good, and diffused it over all countries; and now guarantee the fullest authority both to honor the Divine law as it should be honored, with all reverence, and pay due observance to those who have dedicated themselves to the service of that law. These rising as from some dark abyss and, with an enlightened knowledge of the present course of events, will henceforward render to its precepts that becoming reverence and honor which are consistent with their pious character.

Let this ordinance be published in our Eastern provinces."[30]

Chapter XLIII. *How the Enactments of Constantine Were Carried into Effect.*

Such were the injunctions contained in the first letter which the emperor addressed to us. And the provisions of this enactment were speedily carried into effect, everything being conducted in a manner quite different from the atrocities which had but lately been daringly perpetrated during the cruel ascendancy of the tyrants.

Those persons also who were legally entitled to it, received the benefit of the emperor's liberality.

Chapter XLIV. *That He Promoted Christians to Offices of Government, and Forbade Gentiles in Such Stations to Offer Sacrifice.*

After this the emperor continued to address himself to matters of high importance, and first he sent governors to the several provinces, mostly such as were devoted to the saving faith; and if any appeared inclined to adhere to Gentile worship, he forbade them to offer sacrifice. This law applied also to those who surpassed the provincial governors in rank and dignity,[31] and even to those who occupied the highest station, and held the authority of the Praetorian Praefecture.[32] If they were Christians, they were free to act consistently with their profession; if otherwise, the law required them to abstain from idolatrous sacrifices.

Chapter XLV. *Statutes Which Forbade Sacrifice, and Enjoined the Building of Churches.*

Soon after this, two laws were promulgated about the same time; one of which was intended to restrain the idolatrous abominations which in time past had been practiced in every city and country; and it provided that no one should erect images, or practice divination and other false and foolish arts, or offer sacrifice in any way.[33] The other statute commanded the heightening of the oratories, and the enlargement in length and breadth of the churches of God; as though it were expected that, now the madness of polytheism was wholly removed, pretty nearly all mankind would henceforth attach themselves to the service of God. His own personal piety induced the emperor to devise and write these instructions to the governors of the several provinces: and the law farther admonished them not to spare the

expenditure of money, but to draw supplies from the imperial treasury itself. Similar instructions were written also to the bishops of the several churches; and the emperor was pleased to transmit the same to myself, being the first letter which he personally addressed to me.

Chapter XLVI. *Constantine's Letter to Eusebius and Other Bishops, Respecting the Building of Churches, with Instructions to Repair the Old, and Erect New Ones on a Larger Scale, with the Aid of the Provincial Governors.*

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Eusebius.

"Forasmuch as the unholy and willful rule of tyranny has persecuted the servants of our Saviour until this present time, I believe and have fully satisfied myself, best beloved brother, that the buildings belonging to all the churches have either become ruinous through actual neglect, or have received inadequate attention from the dread of the violent spirit of the times.

"But now, that liberty is restored, and that serpent[34] driven from the administration of public affairs by the providence of the Supreme God, and our instrumentality, we trust that all can see the efficacy of the Divine power, and that they who through fear of persecution or through unbelief have fallen into any errors, will now acknowledge the true God, and adopt in future that course of life which is according to truth and rectitude. With respect, therefore, to the churches over which you yourself preside, as well as the bishops, presbyters, and deacons of other churches with whom you are acquainted, do you admonish all to be zealous in their attention to the buildings of the churches, and either to repair or enlarge those which at present exist, or, in cases of necessity, to erect new ones.

"We also empower you, and the others through you, to

demand what is needful for the work, both from the provincial governors and from the Praetorian Praefect. For they have received instructions to be most diligent in obedience to your Holiness's orders. God preserve you, beloved brother." A copy of this charge was transmitted throughout all the provinces to the bishops of the several churches: the provincial governors received directions accordingly, and the imperial statute was speedily carried into effect.

Chapter XLVII. *That He Wrote a Letter in Condemnation of Idolatry.*

Moreover, the emperor, who continually made progress in piety towards God, dispatched an admonitory letter to the inhabitants of every province, respecting the error of idolatry into which his predecessors in power had fallen, in which he eloquently exhorts his subjects to acknowledge the Supreme God, and openly to profess their allegiance to his Christ as their Saviour. This letter also, which is in his own handwriting, I have judged it necessary to translate from the Latin for the present work, in order that we may hear, as it were, the voice the emperor himself uttering these sentiments in the audience of all mankind.

Chapter XLVIII. *Constantine's Edict to the People of the Provinces Concerning the Error of Polytheism, Commencing with Some General Remarks on Virtue and Vice.*

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to the people of the Eastern provinces.

"Whatever is comprehended under the sovereign[35] laws of nature, seems to convey to all men an adequate idea of the forethought and intelligence of the divine order. Nor can any, whose minds are directed in the true path of knowledge to the attainment of that end, entertain a doubt that the just perceptions of sound reason, as well as

those of the natural vision itself, through the sole influence of genuine virtue, lead to the knowledge of God. Accordingly no wise man will ever be surprised when he sees the mass of mankind influenced by opposite sentiments. For the beauty of virtue would be useless[36] and unperceived, did not vice display in contrast with it the course of perversity and folly. Hence it is that the one is crowned with reward, while the most high God is himself the administrator of judgment to the other.

"And now I will endeavor to lay before you all as explicitly as possible, the nature of my own hopes of future happiness.[37]

Chapter XLIX. *Concerning Constantine's Pious Father, and the Persecutors Diocletian and Maximian.*

"The former emperors I have been accustomed to regard as those with whom I could have no sympathy,[38] on account of the savage cruelty of their character. Indeed, my father was the only one who uniformly practiced the duties of humanity, and with admirable piety called for the blessing of God the Father on all his actions, but the rest, unsound in mind, were more zealous of cruel than gentle measures; and this disposition they indulged without restraint, and thus persecuted the true doctrine during the whole period of their reign. Nay, so violent did their malicious fury become, that in the midst of a profound peace, as regards both the religious and ordinary interests of men, they kindled, as it were, the flames of a civil war.[39]

Chapter L. *That the Persecution Originated on Account of the Oracle of Apollo, Who, It Was Said, Could Not Give Oracles Because of "The Righteous Men."*

"About that time it is said that Apollo spoke from a deep

and gloomy cavern, and through the medium of no human voice, and declared that *the righteous men* on earth were a bar to his speaking the truth, and accordingly that the oracles from the tripod were fallacious. Hence it was that he suffered his tresses to droop in token of grief,[40] and mourned the evils which the loss of the oracular spirit would entail on mankind. But let us mark the consequences of this.

Chapter LI. *That Constantine, When a Youth, Heard from Him Who Wrote the Persecution Edict that "The Righteous Men" Were the Christians.*

"I call now on thee, most high God, to witness that, when young, I heard him who at that time was chief among the Roman emperors, unhappy, truly unhappy as he was, and laboring under mental delusion, make earnest enquiry of his attendants as to who these righteous ones on earth were, and that one of the Pagan priests then present replied that they were doubtless the Christians. This answer he eagerly received, like some honeyed draught, and unsheathed the sword which was ordained for the punishment of crime, against those whose holiness was beyond reproach. Immediately, therefore, he issued those sanguinary edicts, traced, if I may so express myself, with a sword's point dipped in blood; at the same time commanding his judges to tax their ingenuity for the invention of new and more terrible punishments.

Chapter LII. *The Manifold Forms of Torture and Punishment Practiced Against the Christians.*

"Then, indeed, one might see with what arrogance those venerable worshipers of God were daily exposed, with continued and relentless cruelty, to outrages of the most grievous kind, and how that modesty of character[41] which no enemy had ever treated with disrespect, became

the mere sport of their infuriated fellow-citizens. Is there any punishment by fire, are there any tortures or forms of torment, which were not applied to all, without distinction of age or sex? Then, it may be truly said, the earth shed tears, the all-encircling compass of heaven mourned because of the pollution of blood; and the very light of day itself was darkened in grief at the spectacle.

Chapter LIII. *That the Barbarians Kindly Received the Christians.*

"But what is the consequence of this? Why, the barbarians themselves may boast now of the contrast their conduct presents to these creel deeds; for they received and kept in gentlest captivity those who then fled from amongst us, and secured to them not merely safety from danger, but also the free exercise of their holy religion. And now the Roman people bear that lasting stain which the Christians, at that time driven from the Roman world, and taking refuge with the barbarians, have branded on them.

Chapter LIV. *What Vengeance Overtook Those Who on Account of the Oracle Raised the Persecution.*

"But why need I longer dwell on these lamentable events, and the general sorrow which in consequence pervaded the world? The perpetrators of this dreadful guilt are now no more: they have experienced a miserable end, and are consigned to unceasing punishment in the depths of the lower world. They encountered each other in civil strife, and have left neither name nor race behind. And surely this calamity would never have befallen them, had not that impious deliverance of the Pythian oracle exercised a delusive power over them.[42]

Chapter LV. *Constantine Gives Glory to God, Makes Grateful Acknowledgment of the Sign of the Cross, and Prays for the Churches and*

People.

And now I beseech thee, most mighty God, to be merciful and gracious to thine Eastern nations, to thy people in these provinces, worn as they are by protracted miseries; and grant them healing through thy servant. Not without cause, O holy God, do I prefer this prayer to thee, the Lord of all. Under thy guidance have I devised and accomplished measures fraught with blessings: preceded by thy sacred sign I have led thy armies to victory: and still, on each occasion of public danger, I follow the same symbol of thy perfections while advancing to meet the foe. Therefore have I dedicated to thy service a soul duly attempered by love and fear. For thy name I truly love, while I regard with reverence that power of which thou hast given abundant proofs, to the confirmation and increase of my faith. I hasten, then, to devote all my powers to the restoration of thy most holy dwelling-place, which those profane and impious men have defiled by the contamination of violence.

Chapter LVI. *He Prays that All May Be Christians, But Compels None.*

"My own desire is, for the common good of the world and the advantage of all mankind, that thy people should enjoy a life of peace and undisturbed concord. Let those, therefore, who still delight in error, be made welcome to the same degree of peace and tranquillity which they have who believe. For it may be that this restoration of equal privileges to all will prevail to lead them into the straight path. Let no one molest another, but let every one do as his soul desires. Only let men of sound judgment be assured of this, that those only can live a life of holiness and purity, whom thou callest to a reliance on thy holy laws. With regard to those who will hold themselves aloof from us, let them have, if they please, their temples[43] of lies: *we* have the glorious edifice of thy

truth, which thou hast given us as our native home.[44] We pray, however, that they too may receive the same blessing, and thus experience that heartfelt joy which unity of sentiment inspires.

Chapter LVII. *He Gives Glory to God, Who Has Given Light by His Son to Those Who Were in Error.*

"And truly our worship is no new or recent thing, but one which thou hast ordained for thine own due honor, from the time when, as we believe, this system of the universe was first established. And, although mankind have deeply fallen, and have been seduced by manifold errors, yet hast thou revealed a pure light in the person of thy Son, that the power of evil should not utterly prevail, and hast thus given testimony to all men concerning thyself.

Chapter LVIII. *He Glorifies Him Again for His Government of the Universe.*

The truth of this is assured to us by thy works. It is thy power which removes our guilt, and makes us faithful. The sun and the moon have their settled course. The stars move in no uncertain orbits round this terrestrial globe. The revolution of the seasons recurs according to unerring laws. The solid fabric of the earth was established by thy word: the winds receive their impulse at appointed times; and the course of the waters continues with ceaseless flow,[45] the ocean is circumscribed by an immovable barrier, and whatever is comprehended within the compass of earth and sea, is all contrived for wondrous and important ends.

"Were it not so, were not all regulated by the determination of thy will, so great a diversity, so manifold a division of power, would unquestionably have brought ruin on the whole race and its affairs. For those agencies which have maintained a mutual strife[46] would thus have carried to a more deadly length that hostility

against the human race which they even now exercise, though unseen by mortal eyes.

Chapter LIX. *He Gives Glory to God, as the Constant Teacher of Good.*

"Abundant thanks, most mighty God, and Lord of all, be rendered to thee, that, by so much as our nature becomes known from the diversified pursuits of man, by so much the more are the precepts of thy divine doctrine confirmed to those whose thoughts are directed aright, and who are sincerely devoted to true virtue. As for those who will not allow themselves to be cured of their error, let them not attribute this to any but themselves. For that remedy which is of sovereign and healing virtue is openly placed within the reach of all. Only let not any one inflict an injury on that religion which experience itself testifies to be pure and undefiled. Henceforward, therefore, let us all enjoy in common the privilege placed within our reach, I mean the blessing of peace, endeavoring to keep our conscience pure from all that is contrary.

Chapter LX. *An Admonition at the Close of the Edict, that No One Should Trouble His Neighbor.*

"Once more, let none use that to the detriment of another which he may himself have received on conviction of its truth; but let every, one, if it be possible, apply what he has understood and known to the benefit of his neighbor; if otherwise, let him relinquish the attempt. For it is one thing voluntarily to undertake the conflict for immortality, another to compel others to do so from the fear of punishment.

"These are our words; and we have enlarged on these topics more than our ordinary clemency would have dictated, because we were unwilling to dissemble or be false to the true faith; and the more so, since we

understand there are some who say that the rites of the heathen temples, and the power of darkness, have been entirely removed. We should indeed have earnestly recommended such removal to all men, were it not that the rebellious spirit of those wicked errors still continues obstinately fixed in the minds of some, so as to discourage the hope of any general restoration of mankind to the ways of truth."[47]

Chapter LXI. *How Controversies Originated at Alexandria Through Matters Relating to Arius.*[48]

In this manner the emperor, like a powerful herald of God, addressed himself by his own letter to all the provinces, at the same time warning his subjects against superstitious[49] error, and encouraging them in the pursuit of true godliness. But in the midst of his joyful anticipations of the success of this measure, he received tidings of a most serious disturbance which had invaded the peace of the Church. This intelligence he heard with deep concern, and at once endeavored to devise a remedy for the evil. The origin of this disturbance may be thus described. The people of God were in a truly flourishing state, and abounding in the practice of good works. No terror from without assailed them, but a bright and most profound peace, through the favor of God, encompassed his Church on every side. Meantime, however, the spirit of envy was watching to destroy our blessings, which at first crept in unperceived, but soon revelled in the midst of the assemblies of the saints. At length it reached the bishops themselves, and arrayed them in angry hostility against each other, on pretense of a jealous regard for the doctrines of Divine truth. Hence it was that a mighty fire was kindled as it were from a little spark, and which, originating in the first instance in the Alexandrian church,[50] overspread the whole of Egypt and Libya, and

the further Thebaid. Eventually it extended its ravages to the other provinces and cities of the empire; so that not only the prelates of the churches might be seen encountering each other in the strife of words, but the people themselves were completely divided, some adhering to one faction and others to another. Nay, so notorious did the scandal of these proceedings become, that the sacred matters of inspired teaching were exposed to the most shameful ridicule in the very theaters of the unbelievers.

Chapter LXII. *Concerning the Same Arius, and the Melitians.*[51]

Some thus at Alexandria maintained an obstinate conflict on the highest questions. Others throughout Egypt and the Upper Thebaid, were at variance on account of an earlier controversy: so that the churches were everywhere distracted by divisions. The body therefore being thus diseased, the whole of Libya caught the contagion; and the rest of the remoter provinces became affected with the same disorder. For the disputants at Alexandria sent emissaries to the bishops of the several provinces, who accordingly ranged themselves as partisans on either side, and shared in the same spirit of discord.

Chapter LXIII. *How Constantine Sent a Messenger and a Letter Concerning Peace.*

As soon as the emperor was informed of these facts, which he heard with much sorrow of heart, considering them in the light of a calamity personally affecting himself, he forthwith selectedfrom the Christians in his train one whom he well knew to be approved for the sobriety and genuineness of his faith,[52] and who had before this time distinguished himself by the boldness. of his religious profession, and sent him to negotiate peace[53] between the dissentient parties at Alexandria. He also made him the bearer of a most needful and

appropriate letter to the original movers of the strife: and this letter, as exhibiting a specimen of his watchful care over God's people, it may be well to introduce into this our narrative of his life. Its purport was as follows.

Chapter LXIV. *Constantine's Letter to Alexander the Bishop, and Arius the Presbyter.*

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Alexander and Arius.

"I call that God to witness, as well I may, who is the helper of my endeavors, and the Preserver of all men, that I had a twofold reason for undertaking that duty which I have now performed.

Chapter LXV. *His Continual Anxiety for Peace.*

"My design then was, first, to bring the diverse judgments formed by all nations respecting the Deity to a condition, as it were, of settled uniformity; and, secondly, to restore to health the system of the world, then suffering under the malignant power of a grievous distemper. Keeping these objects in view, I sought to accomplish the one by the secret eye of thought, while the other I tried to rectify by the power of military authority. For I was aware that, if I should succeed in establishing, according to my hopes, a common harmony of sentiment among all the servants of God, the general course of affairs would also experience a change correspondent to the pious desires of them all.

Chapter LXVI. *That He Also Adjusted the Controversies Which Had Arisen in Africa.*

"Finding, then, that the whole of Africa was pervaded by an intolerable spirit of mad folly, through the influence of those who with heedless frivolity had presumed to rend the religion of the people into diverse sects; I was anxious to check this disorder, and could discover no other remedy equal to the occasion, except in sending

some of yourselves to aid in restoring mutual harmony among the disputants, after I had removed that common enemy[54] of mankind who had interposed his lawless sentence for the prohibition of your holy synods.

Chapter LXVII. *That Religion Began in the East.*

"For since the power of Divine light, and the law of sacred worship, which, proceeding in the first instance, through the favor of God, from the bosom, as it were, of the East, have illumined the world, by their sacred radiance, I naturally believed that you would be the first to promote the salvation of other nations, and resolved with all energy of thought and diligence of enquiry to seek your aid. As soon, therefore, as I had secured my decisive victory and unquestionable triumph over my enemies, my first enquiry was concerning that object which I felt to be of paramount interest and importance.

Chapter LXVIII. *Being Grieved by the Dissension, He Counsels Peace.*

"But, O glorious Providence of God! how deep a wound did not my ears only, but my very heart receive in the report that divisions existed among yourselves more grievous still than those which continued in that country![55] so that you, through whose aid I had hoped to procure a remedy for the errors of others, are in a state which needs healing even more than theirs. And yet, having made a careful enquiry into the origin and foundation of these differences, I find the cause to be of a truly insignificant character, and quite unworthy of such fierce contention. Feeling myself, therefore, compelled to address you in this letter, and to appeal at the same time to your unanimity[56] and sagacity, I call on Divine Providence to assist me in the task, while I interrupt your dissension in the character of a minister of peace. And with reason: for if I might expect, with the help of a

higher Power, to be able without difficulty, by a judicious appeal to the pious feelings of those who heard me, to recall them to a better spirit, even though the occasion of the disagreement were a greater one, how can I refrain from promising myself a far easier and more speedy adjustment of this difference, when the cause which hinders general harmony of sentiment is intrinsically trifling and of little moment?

Chapter LXIX. *Origin of the Controversy Between Alexander and Arius, and that These Questions Ought Not to Have Been Discussed.*

I Understand, then, that the origin of the present controversy is this. When you, Alexander, demanded of the presbyters what opinion they severally maintained respecting a certain passage in the Divine law,[57] or rather, I should say, that you asked them something connected with an unprofitable question, then you, Arius, inconsiderately insisted on[58] what ought never to have been conceived at all, or if conceived, should have been buried in profound silence. Hence it was that a dissension arose between you, fellowship was withdrawn,[59] and the holy people, rent into diverse parties, no longer preserved the unity of the one body. Now, therefore, do ye both exhibit an equal degree of forbearance,[60] and receive the advice which your fellow-servant righteously gives. What then is this advice? It was wrong in the first instance to propose such questions as these, or to reply to them when propounded. For those points of discussion which are enjoined by the authority of no law, but rather suggested by the contentious spirit which is fostered by misused leisure, even though they may be intended merely as an intellectual exercise, ought certainly to be confined to the region of our own thoughts, and not hastily produced in the popular assemblies, nor unadvisedly intrusted to the general ear. For how very few are there able either

accurately to comprehend, or adequately to explain subjects so sublime and abstruse in their nature? Or, granting that one were fully competent for this, how many people will he convince? Or, who, again, in dealing with questions of such subtle nicety as these, can secure himself against a dangerous declension from the truth? It is incumbent therefore on us in these cases to be sparing of our words, lest, in case we ourselves are unable, through the feebleness of our natural faculties, to give a clear explanation of the subject before us, or, on the other hand, in case the slowness of our hearers' understandings disables them from arriving at an accurate apprehension of what we say, from one or other of these causes the people be reduced to the alternative either of blasphemy or schism.

Chapter LXX. *An Exhortation to Unanimity.*

"Let therefore both the unguarded question and the inconsiderate answer receive your mutual forgiveness.[61] For the cause of your difference has not been any of the leading doctrines or precepts of the Divine law, nor has any new heresy respecting the worship of God arisen among you. You are in truth of one and the same judgment:[62] you may therefore well join in communion and fellowship.

Chapter LXXI. *There Should Be No Contention in Matters Which are in Themselves of Little Moment.*

"For as long as you continue to contend about these small and very insignificant questions, it is not fitting that so large a portion of God's people should be under the direction of your judgment, since you are thus divided between yourselves. I believe it indeed to be not merely unbecoming, but positively evil, that such should be the case. But I will refresh your minds by a little illustration, as follows. You know that philosophers, though they all

adhere to one system, are yet frequently at issue on certain points, and differ, perhaps, in their degree of knowledge: yet they are recalled to harmony of sentiment by the uniting power of their common doctrines. If this be true, is it not far more reasonable that you, who are the ministers of the Supreme God, should be of one mind respecting the profession of the same religion? But let us still more thoughtfully and with closer attention examine what I have said, and see whether it be right that, on the ground of some trifling and foolish verbal difference between ourselves, brethren should assume towards each other the attitude of enemies, and the august meeting of the Synod be rent by profane disunion, because of you who wrangle together on points so trivial and altogether unessential? This is vulgar, and rather characteristic of childish ignorance, than consistent I with the wisdom of priests and men of sense. Let us withdraw ourselves with a good will from these temptations of the devil. Our great God and common Saviour of all has granted the same light to us all. Permit me, who am his servant, to bring my task to a successful issue, under the direction of his Providence, that I may be enabled, through my exhortations, and diligence, and earnest admonition, to recall his people to communion and fellowship. For since you have, as I said, but one faith, and one sentiment respecting our religion, and since the Divine commandment in all its parts enjoins on us all the duty of maintaining a spirit of concord, let not the circumstance which has led to a slight difference between you, since it does not affect the validity of the whole, cause any division or schism among you. And this I say without in any way desiring to force you to entire unity of judgment in regard to this truly idle question, whatever its real nature may be. For the dignity of your synod may be preserved, and the communion of your whole body

maintained unbroken, however wide a difference may exist among you as to unimportant matters. For we are not all of us like-minded on every subject, nor is there such a thing as one disposition and judgment common to all alike. As far, then, as regards the Divine Providence, let there be one faith, and one understanding among you, one united judgment in reference to God. But as to your subtle disputations on questions of little or no significance, though you may be unable to harmonize in sentiment, such differences should be consigned to the secret custody of your own minds and thoughts. And now, let the preciousness of common affection, let faith in the truth, let the honor due to God and to the observance of his law continue immovably among you. Resume, then, your mutual feelings of friendship, love, and regard: restore to the people their wonted embracings; and do ye yourselves, having purified your souls, as it were, once more acknowledge one another. For it often happens that when a reconciliation is effected by the removal of the causes of enmity, friendship becomes even sweeter than it was before.

Chapter LXXII. *The Excess of His Pious Concern Caused Him to Shed Tears; And His Intended Journey to the East Was Postponed Because of These Things.*

"Restore me then my quiet days, and untroubled nights, that the joy of undimmed light, the delight of a tranquil life, may henceforth be my portion. Else must I needs mourn, with constant tears, nor shall I be able to pass the residue of my days in peace. For while the people of God, whose fellow-servant I am, are thus divided amongst themselves by an unreasonable and pernicious spirit of contention, how is it possible that I shall be able to maintain tranquillity of mind? And I will give you a proof how great my sorrow has been on this behalf. Not

long since I had visited Nicomedia, and intended forthwith to proceed from that city to the East. It was while I was hastening towards you, and had already accomplished the greater part of the distance, that the news of this matter reversed my plan, that I might not be compelled to see with my own eyes that which I felt myself scarcely able even to hear. Open then for me henceforward by your unity of judgment that road to the regions of the East which your dissensions have closed against me, and permit me speedily to see yourselves and all other peoples rejoicing together, and render due acknowledgment to God in the language of praise and thanksgiving for the restoration of general concord and liberty to all."

Chapter LXXIII. *The Controversy Continues Without Abatement, Even After the Receipt of This Letter.*

In this manner the pious emperor endeavored by means of the foregoing letter to promote the peace of the Church of God. And the excellent man[63] to whom it was intrusted performed his part not merely by communicating the letter itself, but also by seconding the views of him who sent it; for he was, as I have said, in all respects a person of pious character. The evil, however, was greater than could be remedied by a single letter, insomuch that the acrimony of the contending parties continually increased, and the effects of the mischief extended to all the Eastern provinces. These things jealousy and some evil spirit who looked with an envious eye on the prosperity of the Church, wrought.

Book III.

Chapter I. *A Comparison of Constantine's Piety with the Wickedness of the Persecutors.*

In this manner that spirit who is the hater of good, actuated by envy at the blessing enjoyed by the Church,

continued to raise against her the stormy troubles of intestine discord, in the midst of a period of peace and joy. Meanwhile, however, the divinely-favored emperor did not slight the duties befitting him, but exhibited in his whole conduct a direct contrast to those atrocities of which the cruel tyrants had been lately guilty,[1] and thus triumphed over every enemy that opposed him. For in the first place, the tyrants, being themselves alienated from the true God, had enforced by every compulsion the worship of false deities: Constantine convinced mankind by actions as well as words,[2] that these bad but an imaginary existence, and exhorted them to acknowledge the only true God. They had derided his Christ with words of blasphemy: he assumed that as his safeguard[3] against which they directed their blasphemies, and gloried in the symbol of the Saviour's passion. They had persecuted and driven from house and home the servants of Christ: he recalled them every one, and restored them to their native homes. They had covered them with dishonor: he made their condition honorable and enviable in the eyes of all. They had shamefully plundered and sold the goods of godly men: Constantine not only replaced this loss, but still further enriched them with abundant presents. They had circulated injurious calumnies, through their written ordinances, against the prelates of the Church: he on the contrary, conferred dignity on these individuals by personal marks of honor, and by his edicts and statutes raised them to higher distinction than before. They had utterly demolished and razed to the ground the houses of prayer: he commanded that those which still existed should be enlarged, and that new ones should be raised on a magnificent scale at the expense of the imperial treasury. They had ordered the inspired records to be burnt and utterly destroyed: he decreed that copies of them should be multiplied, and

magnificently adorned[4] at the charge of the imperial treasury. They had strictly forbidden the prelates, anywhere or on any occasion, to convene synods; whereas he gathered them to his court from every province, received them into his palace, and even to his own private apartments and thought them worthy to share his home and table. They had honored the demons with offerings: Constantine exposed their error, and continually distributed the now useless materials for sacrifice, to those who would apply them to a better use. They had ordered the pagan temples to be sumptuously adorned: he razed to their foundations those of them which had been the chief objects of superstitious reverence. They had subjected God's servants to the most ignominious punishments: he took vengeance on the persecutors, and inflicted on them just chastisement in the name of God, while he held the memory of his holy martyrs in constant veneration. They had driven God's Worshipers from the imperial palaces: he placed full confidence in them at all times, and knowing them to be the better disposed and more faithful than any beside. They, the victims of avarice, voluntarily subjected themselves as it were to the pangs of Tantalus: he with royal magnificence unlocked all his treasures, and distributed his gifts with rich and high-souled liberality They committed countless murders, that they might plunder or confiscate the wealth of their victims; while throughout the reign of Constantine the sword of justice hung idle everywhere, and both people and municipal magistrates[5] in every provence were governed rather by paternal authority than by any constraining.[6] Surely it must seem to all who duly regard these facts, that a new and fresh era of existence had begun to appear, and a light heretofore unknown suddenly to dawn from the midst of darkness on the human race: and all must

confess that these things were entirely the work of God, who raised up this pious emperor to withstand the multitude of the ungodly.

Chapter II. *Father Remarks on Constantine's Piety, and His Open Testimony to the Sign of the Cross.*

And when we consider that their iniquities were without example, and the atrocities which they dared to perpetrate against the Church such as had never been heard of in any age of the world, well might God himself bring before us something entirely new, and work thereby effects such as had hitherto been never either recorded or observed. And what miracle was ever more marvelous than the virtues of this our emperor, whom the wisdom of God has vouchsafed as a gift to the human race? For truly he maintained a continual testimony to the Christ of God with all boldness, and before all men; and so far was he from shrinking from an open profession of the Christian name, that he rather desired to make it manifest to all that he regarded this as his highest honor, now impressing on his face the salutary sign, and now glorying in it as the trophy which led him on to victory.[7]

Chapter III. *Of His Picture Surmounted by a Cross and Having Beneath It a Dragon.*

And besides this, he caused to be painted on a lofty tablet, and set up in the front of the portico of his palace, so as to be visible to all, a representation of the salutary sign placed above his head, and below it that hateful and savage adversary of mankind, who by means of the tyranny of the ungodly had wasted the Church of God, falling headlong, under the form of a dragon, to the abyss of destruction. For the sacred oracles in the books of God's prophets have described him as a dragon and a crooked serpent;[8] and for this reason the emperor thus publicly displayed a painted[9] resemblance of the dragon

beneath his own and his children's feet, stricken through with a dart, and cast headlong into the depths of the sea. In this manner he intended to represent the secret adversary of the human race, and to indicate that he was consigned to the gulf of perdition by virtue of the salutary trophy placed above his head. This allegory, then, was thus conveyed by means of the colors of a picture: and I am filled with wonder at the intellectual greatness of the emperor, who as if by divine inspiration thus expressed what the prophets had foretold concerning this monster, saying that "God would bring his great and strong and terrible sword against the dragon, the flying serpent; and would destroy the dragon that was in the sea."[10] This it was of which the emperor gave a true and faithful representation in the picture above described.

Chapter IV. *A Farther Notice of the Controversies Raised in Egypt by Arius.*

In such occupations as these he employed himself with pleasure: but the effects of that envious spirit which so troubled the peace of the churches of God in Alexandria, together with the Theban and Egyptian schism, continued to cause him no little disturbance of mind. For in fact, in every city bishops were engaged in obstinate conflict with bishops, and people rising against people; and almost like the fabled Symplegades,[11] coming into violent collision with each other. Nay, some were so far transported beyond the bounds of reason as to be guilty of reckless and outrageous conduct, and even to insult the statues of the emperor. This state of things had little power to excite his anger, but rather caused in him sorrow of spirit; for he deeply deplored the folly thus exhibited by deranged men.

Chapter V. *Of the Disagreement Respecting the Celebration of Easter.*

But before this time another most virulent disorder had

existed, and long afflicted the Church; I mean the difference respecting the salutary feast of Easter.[12] For while one party asserted that the Jewish custom should be adhered to, the other affirmed that the exact recurrence of the period should be observed, without following the authority of those who were in error, and strangers to gospel grace.

Accordingly, the people being thus in every place divided in respect of this,[13] and the sacred observances of religion confounded for a long period (insomuch that the diversity of judgment in regard to the time for celebrating one and the same feast caused the greatest disagreement between those who kept it, some afflicting themselves with fastings and austerities, while others devoted their time to festive relaxation), no one appeared who was capable of devising a remedy for the evil, because the controversy continued equally balanced between both parties. To God alone, the Almighty, was the healing of these differences an easy task; and Constantine appeared to be the only one on earth capable of being his minister for this good end. For as soon as he was made acquainted with the facts which I have described, and perceived that his letter to the Alexandrian Christians had failed to produce its due effect, he at once aroused the energies of his mind, and declared that he must prosecute to the utmost this war also against the secret adversary who was disturbing the peace of the Church.

Chapter VI. *How He Ordered a Council to Be Held at Nicoea.*

Then as if to bring a divine array against this enemy, he convoked a general council, and invited the speedy attendance of bishops from all quarters, in letters expressive of the honorable estimation in which he held them. Nor was this merely the issuing of a bare command

but the emperor's good will contributed much to its being carried into effect: for he allowed some the use of the public means of conveyance, while he afforded to others an ample supply of horses[14] for their transport. The place, too, selected for the synod, the city Nicaea in Bithynia (named from "*Victory*"), was appropriate to the occasion.[15] As soon then as the imperial injunction was generally made known, all with the utmost willingness hastened thither, as though they would outstrip one another in a race; for they were impelled by the anticipation of a happy result to the conference, by the hope of enjoying present peace, and the desire of beholding something new and strange in the person of so admirable an emperor. Now when they were all assembled, it appeared evident that the proceeding was the work of God, inasmuch as men who had been most widely separated, not merely in sentiment but also personally, and by difference of country, place, and nation, were here brought together, and comprised within the walls of a single city, forming as it were a vast garland of priests, composed of a variety of the choicest flowers.

Chapter VII. *Of the General Council, at Which Bishops from All Nations Were Present.*[16]

In effect, the most distinguished of God's ministers from all the churches which abounded in Europe, Lybia,[17] and Asia were here assembled. And a single house of prayer, as though divinely enlarged, sufficed to contain at once Syrians and Cilicians, Phoenicians and Arabians, delegates from Palestine, and others from Egypt; Thebans and Libyans, with those who came from the region of Mesopotamia. A Persian bishop too was present at this conference, nor was even a Scythian found wanting to the number.[18] Pontus, Galatia, and Pamphylia,

Cappadocia, Asia, and Phrygia, furnished their most distinguished prelates; while those who dwelt in the remotest districts of Thrace and Macedonia, of Achaia and Epirus, were notwithstanding in attendance. Even from Spain itself, one whose fame was widely spread took his seat as an individual in the great assembly.[19] The prelate of the imperial city[20] was prevented from attending by extreme old age; but his presbyters were present, and supplied his place. Constantine is the first prince of any age who bound together such a garland as this with the bond of peace, and presented it to his Saviour as a thank-offering for the victories he had obtained over every foe, thus exhibiting in our own times a similitude of the apostolic company.

Chapter VIII. *That the Assembly Was Composed, as in the Dots of the Apostles, of Individuals from Various Nations.*

For it is said[21] that in the Apostles' age, there were gathered "devout men from every nation under heaven"; among whom were Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene; and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians. But that assembly was less, in that not all who composed it were ministers of God; but in the present company, the number of bishops exceeded two hundred and fifty,[22] while that of the presbyters and deacons in their train, and the crowd of acolytes and other attendants was altogether beyond computation.

Chapter IX. *Of the Virtue and Age of the Two Hundred and Fifty Bishops.*

Of these ministers of God, some were distinguished by wisdom and eloquence, others by the gravity of their

lives, and by patient fortitude of character, while others again united in themselves all these graces.[23] There were among them men whose years demanded veneration: others were younger, and in the prime of mental vigor; and some had but recently entered on the course of their ministry. For the maintenance of all ample provision was daily furnished by the emperor's command.

Chapter X. *Council in the Palace. Constantine, Entering, Took His Seat in the Assembly.*

Now when the appointed day arrived on which the council met for the final solution of the questions in dispute, each member was present for this in the central building of the palace,[24] which appeared to exceed the rest in magnitude. On each side of the interior of this were many seats disposed in order, which were occupied by those who had been invited to attend, according to their rank. As soon, then, as the whole assembly had seated themselves with becoming orderliness, a general silence prevailed, in expectation of the emperor's arrival. And first of all, three of his immediate family entered in succession, then others also preceded his approach, not of the soldiers or guards who usually accompanied him, but only friends in the faith. And now, all rising at the signal which indicated the emperor's entrance, at last he himself proceeded through the midst of the assembly, like some heavenly messenger of God, clothed in raiment which glittered as it were with rays of light, reflecting the glowing radiance of a purple robe, and adorned with the brilliant splendor of gold and precious stones. Such was the external appearance of his person; and with regard to his mind, it was evident that he was distinguished by piety and godly fear. This was indicated by his downcast eyes, the blush on his countenance, and his gait. For the rest of his personal excellencies, he surpassed all present in height of stature and beauty of form, as well as in

majestic dignity of mien, and invincible strength and vigor. All these graces, united to a suavity of manner, and a serenity becoming his imperial station, declared the excellence of his mental qualities to be above all praise.[25] As soon as he had advanced to the upper end of the seats, at first he remained standing, and when a low chair of wrought gold had been set for him, he waited until the bishops had beckoned to him, and then sat down, and after him the whole assembly did the same.

Chapter XI. *Silence of the Council, After Some Words by the the Bishop Eusebius.*

The bishop who occupied the chief place in the right division of the assembly[26] then rose, and, addressing the emperor, delivered a concise speech, in a strain of thanksgiving to Almighty God on his behalf. When he had resumed his seat, silence ensued, and all regarded the emperor with fixed attention; on which he looked serenely round on the assembly with a cheerful aspect, and, having collected his thoughts, in a calm and gentle tone gave utterance to the following words.

Chapter XII. *Constantine's Address to the Council Concerning Peace.*[27]

"It was once my chief desire, dearest friends, to enjoy the spectacle of your united presence; and now that this desire is fulfilled, I feel myself bound to render thanks to God the universal King, because, in addition to all his other benefits, he has granted me a blessing higher than all the rest, in permitting me to see you not only all assembled together, but all united in a common harmony of sentiment. I pray therefore that no malignant adversary may henceforth interfere to mar our happy state; I pray that, now the impious hostility of the tyrants has been forever removed by the power of God our Saviour, that spirit who delights in evil may devise no other means for exposing the divine law to blasphemous calumny; for, in

my judgment, intestine strife within the Church of God, is far more evil and dangerous than any kind of war or conflict; and these our differences appear to me more grievous than any outward trouble. Accordingly, when, by the will and with the co-operation of God, I had been victorious over my enemies, I thought that nothing more remained but to render thanks to him, and sympathize in the joy of those whom he had restored to freedom through my instrumentality; as soon as I heard that intelligence which I had least expected to receive, I mean the news of your dissension, I judged it to be of no secondary importance, but with the earnest desire that a remedy for this evil also might be found through my means, I immediately sent to require your presence. And now I rejoice in beholding your assembly; but I feel that my desires will be most completely fulfilled when I can see you all united in one judgment, and that common spirit of peace and concord prevailing amongst you all, which it becomes you, as consecrated to the service of God, to commend to others. Delay not, then, dear friends: delay not, ye ministers of God, and faithful servants of him who is our common Lord and Saviour: begin from this moment to discard the causes of that disunion which has existed among you, and remove the perplexities of controversy by embracing the principles of peace. For by such conduct you will at the same time be acting in a manner most pleasing to the supreme God, and you will confer an exceeding favor on me who am your fellow-servant."

Chapter XIII. *How He Led the Dissentient Bishops to Harmony of Sentiment.*

As soon as the emperor had spoken these words in the Latin tongue, which another interpreted, he gave permission to those who presided in the council to deliver their opinions. On this some began to accuse their

neighbors, who defended themselves, and recriminated in their turn. In this manner numberless assertions were put forth by each party, and a violent controversy arose at the very commencement. Notwithstanding this, the emperor gave patient audience to all alike, and received every proposition with steadfast attention, and by occasionally assisting the argument of each party in turn, he gradually disposed even the most vehement disputants to a reconciliation. At the same time, by the affability of his address to all, and his use of the Greek language, with which he was not altogether unacquainted, he appeared in a truly attractive and amiable light, persuading some, convincing others by his reasonings, praising those who spoke well, and urging all to unity of sentiment, until at last he succeeded in bringing them to one mind and judgment respecting every disputed question.

Chapter XIV. *Unanimous Declaration of the Council Concerning Faith, and the Celebration of Easter.*

The result was that they were not only united as concerning the faith, but that the time for the celebration of the salutary feast of Easter was agreed on by all. Those points also which were sanctioned by the resolution of the whole body were committed to writing, and received the signature of each several member.[28] Then the emperor, believing that he had thus obtained a second victory over the adversary of the Church, proceeded to solemnize a triumphal festival in honor of God.

Chapter XV. *How Constantine Entertained the Bishops on the Occasion of His Vicennalia.*

About this time he completed the twentieth year of his reign.[29] On this occasion public festivals were celebrated by the people of the provinces generally, but the emperor himself invited and feasted with those ministers of God whom he had reconciled, and thus offered as it were

through them a suitable sacrifice to God. Not one of the bishops was wanting at the imperial banquet,[30] the circumstances of which were splendid beyond description. Detachments of the body-guard and other troops surrounded the entrance of the palace with drawn swords, and through the midst of these the men of God proceeded without fear into the innermost of the imperial apartments, in which some were the emperor's own companions at table, while others reclined on couches arranged on either side.[31] One might have thought that a picture of Christ's kingdom was thus shadowed forth, and a dream rather than reality.

Chapter XVI. *Presents to the Bishops, and Letters to the People Generally.*

After the celebration of this brilliant festival, the emperor courteously received all his guests, and generously added to the favors he had already bestowed by personally presenting gifts to each individual according to his rank. He also gave information of the proceedings of the synod to those who had not been present, by a letter in his own hand-writing. And this letter also I will inscribe as it were on some monument by inserting it in this my narrative of his life. It was as follows:

Chapter XVII. *Constantine's Letter to the Churches Respecting the Council at Nicaea.*

"Constantinus Augustus, to the Churches.

"Having had full proof, in the general prosperity of the empire, how great the favor of God has been towards us, I have judged that it ought to be the first object of my endeavors, that unity of faith, sincerity of love, and community of feeling in regard to the worship of Almighty God, might be preserved among the highly favored multitude who compose the Catholic Church. And, inasmuch as this object could not be effectually and certainly secured, unless all, or at least the greater

number of the bishops were to meet together, and a discussion of all particulars relating to oar most holy religion to take place; for this reason as numerous an assembly as possible has been convened, at which I myself was present, as one among yourselves (and far be it from me to deny that which is my greatest joy, that I am your fellow-servant), and every question received due and full examination, until that judgment which God, who sees all things, could approve, and which tended to unity and concord, was brought to light, so that no room was left for further discussion or controversy in relation to the faith.

Chapter XVIII. *He Speaks of Their Unanimity Respecting the Feast of Easter, and Against the Practice of the Jews.*

"At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present, that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day. For what can be more becoming or honorable to us than that this feast from which we date our hopes of immortality, should be observed unfailingly by all alike, according to one ascertained order and arrangement? And first of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul. For we have it in our power, if we abandon their custom, to prolong the due observance of this ordinance to future ages, by a truer order, which we have preserved from the very day of the passion until the present time. Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way. A course at once legitimate and honorable lies open to our most

holy religion. Beloved brethren, let us with one consent adopt this course, and withdraw ourselves from all participation in their baseness.[32] For their boast is absurd indeed, that it is not in our power without instruction from them to observe these things. For how should they be capable of forming a sound judgment, who, since their parricidal guilt in slaying their Lord, have been subject to the direction, not of reason, but of ungoverned passion, and are swayed by every impulse of the mad spirit that is in them? Hence it is that on this point as well as others they have no perception of the truth, so that, being altogether ignorant of the true adjustment of this question, they sometimes celebrate Easter twice in the same year. Why then should we follow those who are confessedly in grievous error? Surely we shall never consent to keep this feast a second time in the same year. But supposing these reasons were not of sufficient weight, still it would be incumbent on your Sagacities[33] to strive and pray continually that the purity of your souls may not seem in anything to be sullied by fellowship with the customs of these most wicked men. We must consider, too, that a discordant judgment in a case of such importance, and respecting such religious festival, is wrong. For our Saviour has left us one feast in commemoration of the day of our deliverance, I mean the day of his most holy passion; and he has willed that his Catholic Church should be one, the members of which, however scattered in many and diverse places, are yet cherished by one pervading spirit, that is, by the will of God. And let your Holinesses' sagacity reflect how grievous and scandalous it is that on the self-same days some should be engaged in fasting, others in festive enjoyment; and again, that after the days of Easter some should be present at banquets and amusements, while others are fulfilling the appointed fasts. It is, then, plainly

the will of Divine Providence (as I suppose you all clearly see), that this usage should receive fitting correction, and be reduced to one uniform rule.

Chapter XIX. *Exhortation to Follow the Example of the Greater Part of the World.*

"Since, therefore, it was needful that this matter should be rectified, so that we might have nothing in common with that nation of parricides who slew their Lord: and since that arrangement is consistent with propriety which is observed by all the churches of the western, southern, and northern parts of the world, and by some of the eastern also: for these reasons all are unanimous on this present occasion in thinking it worthy of adoption. And I myself have undertaken that this decision should meet with the approval of your Sagacities,[34] in the hope that your Wisdoms[35] will gladly admit that practice which is observed at once in the city of Rome, and in Africa; throughout Italy, and in Egypt, in Spain, the Gauls, Britain, Libya, and the whole of Greece; in the dioceses of Asia and Pontus, and in Cilicia, with entire unity of judgment. And you will consider not only that the number of churches is far greater in the regions I have enumerated than in any other, but also that it is most fitting that all should unite in desiring that which sound reason appears to demand, and in avoiding all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews.[36] In fine, that I may express my meaning in as few words as possible, it has been determined by the common judgment of all, that the most holy feast of Easter should be kept on one and the same day. For on the one hand a discrepancy of opinion on so sacred a question is unbecoming, and on the other it is surely best to act on a decision which is free from strange folly and error.

Chapter XX. *Exhortation to Obey the Decrees of the Council.*

"Receive, then, with all willingness this truly Divine injunction, and regard it as in truth the gift of God. For whatever is determined in the holy assemblies of the bishops is to be regarded as indicative of the Divine will. As soon, therefore, as you have communicated these proceedings to all our beloved brethren, you are bound from that time forward to adopt for yourselves, and to enjoin on others the arrangement above mentioned, and the due observance of this most sacred day; that whenever I come into the presence of your love, which I have long desired, I may have it in my power to celebrate the holy feast with you on the same day, and may rejoice with you on all accounts, when I behold the cruel power of Satan removed by Divine aid through the agency of our endeavors, while your faith, and peace, and concord everywhere flourish. God preserve you, beloved brethren."|

The emperor transmitted a faithful copy[37] of this letter to every province, wherein they who read it might discern as in a mirror the pure sincerity of his thoughts, and of his piety toward God.

Chapter XXI. *Recommendation to the Bishops, on Their Departure, to Preserve Harmony.*

And now, when the council was on the point of being finally dissolved, he summoned all the bishops to meet him on an appointed day, and on their arrival addressed them in a farewell speech, in which he recommended them to be diligent in the maintenance of peace, to avoid contentious disputations, amongst themselves and not to be jealous, if any one of their number should appear pre-eminent for wisdom and eloquence, but to esteem the excellence of one a blessing common to all. On the other hand he reminded them that the more gifted should forbear to exalt themselves to the prejudice of their humbler brethren, since it is God's prerogative to judge

of real superiority. Rather should they considerately condescend to the weaker, remembering that absolute perfection in any case is a rare quality indeed. Each then, should be willing to accord indulgence to the other for slight offenses, to regard charitably and pass over mere human weaknesses; holding mutual harmony in the highest honor, that no occasion of mockery might be given by their dissensions to those who are ever ready to blaspheme the word of God: whom indeed we should do all in our power to save, and this cannot be unless our conduct seems to them attractive. But you are well aware of the fact that testimony is by no means productive of blessing to all, since some who hear are glad to secure the supply of their mere bodily necessities, while others court the patronage of their superiors; some fix their affection on those who treat them with hospitable kindness, others again, being honored with presents, love their benefactors in return; but few are they who really desire the word of testimony, and rare indeed is it to find a friend of truth. Hence the necessity of endeavoring to meet the case of all, and, physician-like, to administer to each that which may tend to the health of the soul, to the end that the saving doctrine may be fully honored by all. Of this kind was the former part of his exhortation;[38] and in conclusion he enjoined them to offer diligent supplications to God on his behalf. Having thus taken leave of them, he gave them all permission to return to their respective countries; and this they did with joy, and thenceforward that unity of judgment at which they had arrived in the emperor's presence continued to prevail, and those who had long been divided were bound together as members of the same body.

Chapter XXII. *How He Dismissed Some, and Wrote Letters to Others; Also His Presents.*

Full of joy therefore at this success, the emperor

presented as it were pleasant fruits in the way of letters to those who had not been present at the council. He commanded also that ample gifts of money should be bestowed on all the people, both in the country and the cities, being pleased thus to honor the festive occasion of the twentieth anniversary of his reign.

Chapter XXIII. *How He Wrote to the Egyptians, Exhorting Them to Peace.*

And now, when all else were at peace, among the Egyptians alone an implacable contention still raged,[39] so as once more to disturb the emperor's tranquillity, though not to excite his anger. For indeed he treated the contending parties with all respect, as fathers, nay rather, as prophets of God; and again he summoned them to his presence, and again patiently acted as mediator between them, and honored them with gifts, and communicated also the result of his arbitration by letter. He confirmed and sanctioned the decrees of the council, and called on them to strive earnestly for concord, and not to distract and rend the Church, but to keep before them the thought of God's judgment. And these injunctions the emperor sent by a letter written with his own hand.

Chapter XXIV. *How He Wrote Frequent Letters of a Religious Character to the Bishops and People.*

But besides these, his writings are very numerous on kindred subjects, and he was the author of a multitude of letters, some to the bishops, in which he laid injunctions on them tending to the advantage of the churches of God; and sometimes the thrice blessed one addressed the people of the churches generally, calling them his own brethren and fellow-servants. But perhaps we may hereafter find leisure to collect these despatches in a separate form, in order that the integrity of our present history may not be impaired by their insertion.

Chapter XXV. *How He Ordered the Erection of a Church at Jerusalem, in the Holy Place of Our Saviour's Resurrection.*

After these things, the pious emperor addressed himself to another work truly worthy of record, in the province of Palestine. What then was this work? He judged it incumbent on him to render the blessed locality of our Saviour's resurrection an object of attraction and veneration to all. He issued immediate injunctions, therefore, for the erection in that spot of a house of prayer: and this he did, not on the mere natural impulse of his own mind, but being moved in spirit by the Saviour himself.

Chapter XXVI. *That the Holy Sepulchre Had Been Covered with Rubbish and with Idols by the Ungodly.*

For it had been in time past the endeavor of impious men (or rather let me say of the whole race of evil spirits through their means), to consign to the darkness of oblivion that divine monument of immortality to which the radiant angel had descended from heaven, and rolled away the stone for those who still had stony hearts, and who supposed that the living One still lay among the dead; and had declared glad tidings to the women also, and removed their stony-hearted unbelief by the conviction that he whom they sought was alive. This sacred cave, then, certain impious and godless persons had thought to remove entirely from the eyes of men, supposing in their folly that thus they should be able effectually to obscure the truth. Accordingly they brought a quantity of earth from a distance with much labor, and covered the entire spot; then, having raised this to a moderate height, they paved it with stone, concealing the holy cave beneath this massive mound. Then, as though their purpose had been effectually accomplished, they

prepare on this foundation a truly dreadful sepulchre of souls, by building a gloomy shrine of lifeless idols to the impure spirit whom they call Venus, and offering detestable oblations therein on profane and accursed altars. For they supposed that their object could not otherwise be fully attained, than by thus burying the sacred cave beneath these foul pollutions. Unhappy men! they were unable to comprehend how impossible it was that their attempt should remain unknown to him who had been crowned with victory over death, any more than the blazing sun, when he rises above the earth, and holds his wonted course through the midst of heaven, is unseen by the whole race of mankind. Indeed, his saving power, shining with still greater brightness, and illumining, not the bodies, but the souls of men, was already filling the world with the effulgence of its own light. Nevertheless, these devices of impious and wicked men against the truth had prevailed for a long time, nor had any one of the governors, or military commanders, or even of the emperors themselves ever yet appeared, with ability to abolish these daring impieties, save only that one who enjoyed the favor of the King of kings. And now, acting as he did under the guidance of the divine Spirit, he could not consent to see the sacred spot of which we have spoken, thus buried, through the devices of the adversaries, under every kind of impurity, and abandoned to forgetfulness and neglect; nor would he yield to the malice of those who had contracted this guilt, but calling on the divine aid, gave orders that the place should be thoroughly purified, thinking that the parts which had been most polluted by the enemy ought to receive special tokens, through his means, of the greatness of the divine favor. As soon, then, as his commands were issued, these engines of deceit were cast down from their proud eminence to the very ground, and the dwelling-places of

error, with the statues and the evil spirits which they represented, were overthrown and utterly destroyed.

Chapter XXVII. *How Constantine Commanded the Materials of the Idol Temple, and the Soil Itself, to Be Removed at a Distance.*

Nor did the emperor's zeal stop here; but he gave further orders that the materials of what was thus destroyed, both stone and timber, should be removed and thrown as far from the spot as possible; and this command also was speedily executed. The emperor, however, was not satisfied with having proceeded thus far: once more, fired with holy ardor, he directed that the ground itself should be dug up to a considerable depth, and the soil which had been polluted by the foul impurities of demon worship transported to a far distant place.

Chapter XXVIII. *Discovery of the Most Holy Sepulchre.*[40]

This also was accomplished without delay. But as soon as the original surface of the ground, beneath the covering of earth, appeared, immediately, and contrary to all expectation, the venerable and hollowed monument of our Saviour's resurrection was discovered. Then indeed did this most holy cave present a faithful simili- tude of his return to life, in that, after lying buried in darkness, it again emerged to light, and afforded to all who came to witness the sight, a clear and visible proof of the wonders of which that spot had once been the scene, a testimony to the resurrection of the Saviour clearer than any voice could give.

Chapter XXIX. *How He Wrote Concerning the Erection of a Church, Both to the Governors of the Provinces, and to the Bishop Macarius.*

Immediately after the transactions I have recorded, the emperor sent forth injunctions which breathed a truly

pious spirit, at the same time granting ample supplies of money, and commanding that a house of prayer worthy of the worship of God should be erected near the Saviour's tomb on a scale of rich and royal greatness. This object he had indeed for some time kept in view, and had foreseen, as if by the aid of a superior intelligence, that which should afterwards come to pass. He laid his commands, therefore, on the governors of the Eastern provinces, that by an abundant and unsparing expenditure they should secure the completion of the work on a scale of noble and ample magnificence. He also despatched the following letter to the bishop who at that time presided over the church at Jerusalem, in which he clearly asserted the saving doctrine of the faith, writing in these terms.

Chapter XXX. *Constantine's Letter to Macarius Respecting the Building of the Church of Our Saviour.*

"Victor Constantius, Maximus Augustus, to Macarius.

1 "Such is our Saviour's grace, that no power of language seems adequate to describe the wondrous circumstance to which I am about to refer. For, that the monument of his most holy Passion, so long ago buried beneath the ground, should have remained unknown for so long a series of years, until its reappearance to his servants now set free through the removal of him[41] who was the common enemy of all, is a fact which truly surpasses all admiration. For if all who are accounted wise throughout the world were to unite in their endeavors to say somewhat worthy of this event, they would be unable to attain their object in the smallest degree. Indeed, the nature of this miracle as far transcends the capacity of human reason as heavenly things are superior to human affairs. For this cause it is ever my first, and indeed my only object, that, as the authority of the truth is evincing

itself daily by fresh wonders, so our souls may all become more zealous, with all sobriety and earnest unanimity, for the honor of the Divine law. I desire, therefore, especially, that you should be persuaded of that which I suppose is evident to all beside, namely, that I have no greater care than how I may best adorn with a splendid structure that sacred spot, which, under Divine direction, I have disencumbered as it were of the heavy weight of foul idol worship; a spot which has been accounted holy from the beginning in God's judgment, but which now appears holier still, since it has brought to light a clear assurance of our Saviour's passion.

Chapter XXXI. *That the Building Should Surpass All the Churches in the World in the Beauty of Its Walls, Its Columns, and Marbles.*

1 "It will be well, therefore, for your sagacity to make such arrangements and provision of all things needful for the work, that not only the church itself as a whole may surpass all others whatsoever in beauty, but that the details of the building may be of such a kind that the fairest structures in any city of the empire may be excelled by this. And with respect to the erection and decoration of the walls, this is to inform you that our friend Dracilianus, the deputy of the Praetorian Praefects, and the governor of the province, have received a charge from us. For our pious directions to them are to the effect that artificers and laborers, and whatever they shall understand from your sagacity to be needful for the advancement of the work, shall forthwith be furnished by their care. And as to the columns and marbles, whatever you shall judge, after actual inspection of the plan, to be especially precious and serviceable, be diligent to send information to us in writing, in order that whatever quantity or sort of materials we shall esteem from your letter to be needful, may be procured from every quarter,

as required, for it is fitting that the most marvelous place in the world should be worthily decorated.

Chapter XXXII. *That He Instructed the Governors Concerning the Beautifying of the Roof; Also Concerning Workmen, and Materials.*

"With respect to the ceiling[42] of the church, I wish to know from you whether in your judgment it should be panel-ceiled,[43] or finished with any other kind of workmanship. If the panel ceiling be adopted, it may also be ornamented with gold. For the rest, your Holiness will give information as early as possible to the before-mentioned magistrates how many laborers and artificers, and what expenditure of money is required. You will also be careful to send us a report without delay, not only respecting the marbles and columns, but the paneled ceiling also, should this appear to you to be the most beautiful form. God preserve you, beloved brother!"

Chapter XXXIII. *How the Church of Our Saviour, the New Jerusalem Prophesied of in Scripture, Was Built.*

This was the emperor's letter; and his directions were at once carried into effect. Accordingly, on the very spot which witnessed the Saviour's sufferings, a new Jerusalem was constructed, over against the one so celebrated of old, which, since the foul stain of guilt brought on it by the murder of the Lord, had experienced the last extremity of desolation, the effect of Divine judgment on its impious people. It was opposite this city that the emperor now began to rear a monument to the Saviour's victory over death, with rich and lavish magnificence. And it may be that this was that second and new Jerusalem spoken of in the predictions of the prophets,[44] concerning which such abundant testimony is given in the divinely inspired records.

First of all, then, he adorned the sacred cave itself, as the chief part of the whole work, and the hallowed monument at which the angel radiant with light had once declared to all that regeneration which was first manifested in the Saviour's person.

Chapter XXXIV. *Description of the Structure of the Holy Sepulchre.*

This monument, therefore, first of all, as the chief part of the whole, the emperor's zealous magnificence beautified with rare columns, anti profusely enriched with the most splendid decorations of every kind.

Chapter XXXV. *Description of the Atrium and Porticos.*

The next object of his attention was a space of ground of great extent, and open to the pure air of heaven. This he adorned with a pavement of finely polished stone, and enclosed it on three sides with porticos of great length.

Chapter XXXVI. *Description of the Walls, Roof, Decoration, and Gilding of the Body of the Church.*

For at the side opposite to the cave, which was the eastern side, the church itself was erected; a noble work rising to a vast height, and of great extent both in length and breadth. The interior of this structure was floored with marble slabs of various colors; while the external surface of the walls, which shone with polished stones exactly fitted together, exhibited a degree of splendor in no respect inferior to that of marble. With regard to the roof, it was covered on the outside with lead, as a protection against the rains of winter. But the inner part of the roof, which was finished with sculptured panel work, extended in a series of connected compartments, like a vast sea, over the whole church;[45] and, being overlaid throughout with the purest gold, caused the entire building to glitter as it were with rays of light.

Chapter XXXVII. *Description of the Double Porticos on Either Side, and of the Three Eastern Gates.*

Besides this were two porticos on each side, with upper and lower ranges of pillars,[46] corresponding in length with the church itself; and these also had their roofs ornamented with gold. Of these porticos, those which were exterior to the church were supported by columns of great size, while those within these rested on piles[47] of stone beautifully adorned on the surface. Three gates, placed exactly east, were intended to receive the multitudes who entered the church.

Chapter XXXVIII. *Description of the Hemisphere, the Twelve Columns, and Their Bowls.*

Opposite these gates the crowning part of the whole was the hemisphere,[48] which rose to the very summit of the church. This was encircled by twelve columns (according to the number of the apostles of our Saviour), having their capitals embellished with silver bowls of great size, which the emperor himself presented as a splendid offering to his God.

Chapter XXXIX. *Description of the Inner Court, the Arcades and Porches.*

In the next place he enclosed the atrium which occupied the space leading to the entrances in front of the church. This comprehended, first the court, then the porticos on each side, and lastly the gates of the court. After these, in the midst of the open market-place,[49] the general entrance-gates, which were of exquisite workmanship, afforded to passers-by on the outside a view of the interior which could not fail to inspire astonishment.

Chapter XL. *Of the Number of His Offerings.*

This temple, then, the emperor erected as a conspicuous monument of the Saviour's resurrection, and embellished

it throughout on an imperial scale of magnificence. He further enriched it with numberless offerings of inexpressible beauty and various materials,-gold, silver, and precious stones, the skillful and elaborate arrangement of which, in regard to their magnitude, number, and variety, we have not leisure at present to describe particularly.[50]

Chapter XLI. *Of the Erection of Churches in Bethlehem, and an the Mount of Olives.*

In the same country he discovered other places, venerable as being the localities of two sacred caves: and these also he adorned with lavish magnificence. In the one case, he rendered due honor to that which had been the scene of the first manifestation of our Saviour's divine presence, when he submitted to be born in mortal flesh; while in the case of the second cavern he hallowed the remembrance of his ascension to heaven from the mountain top. And while he thus nobly testified his reverence for these places, he at the same time eternized the memory of his mother,[51] who had been the instrument of conferring so valuable a benefit on mankind.

Chapter XLII. *That the Empress Helena,[52] Constantine's Mother, Having Visited This Locality for Devotional Purposes, Built These Churches.*

For she, having resolved to discharge the duties of pious devotion to the God, the King of kings, and feeling it incumbent on her to render thanksgivings with prayers on behalf both of her own son, now so mighty an emperor, and of his sons, her own grandchildren, the divinely favored Caesars, though now advanced in years, yet gifted with no common degree of wisdom, had hastened with youthful alacrity to survey this venerable land; and at the same time to visit the eastern provinces, cities, and

people, with a truly imperial solicitude. As soon, then, as she had rendered due reverence to the ground which the Saviour's feet had trodden, according to the prophetic word which says[53] "Let us worship at the place whereon his feet have stood," she immediately bequeathed the fruit of her piety to future generations.

Chapter XLIII. *A Farther Notice of the Churches at Bethlehem.*

For without delay she dedicated two churches to the God whom she adored, one at the grotto which had been the scene of the Saviour's birth; the other on the mount of his ascension. For he who was "God with us" had submitted to be born even in a cave[54] of the earth, and the place of his nativity was called Bethlehem by the Hebrews. Accordingly the pious empress honored with rare memorials the scene of her travail who bore this heavenly child, and beautified the sacred cave with all possible splendor. The emperor himself soon after testified his reverence for the spot by princely offerings, and added to his mother's magnificence by costly presents of silver and gold, and embroidered hangings. And farther, the mother of the emperor raised a stately structure on the Mount of Olives also, in memory of his ascent to heaven who is the Saviour of mankind, erecting a sacred church and temple on the very summit of the mount. And indeed authentic history informs us that in this very cave the Saviour imparted his secret revelations to his disciples.[55] And here also the emperor testified his reverence for the King of kings, by diverse and costly offerings. Thus did Helena Augusta, the pious mother of a pious emperor, erect over the two mystic caverns these two noble and beautiful monuments of devotion, worthy of everlasting remembrance, to the honor of God her Saviour, and as proofs of her holy zeal, receiving from her son the aid of his imperial power. Nor was it long ere this aged woman

reaped the due reward of her labors. After passing the whole period of her life, even to declining age, in the greatest prosperity, and exhibiting both in word and deed abundant fruits of obedience to the divine precepts, and having enjoyed in consequence an easy and tranquil existence, with unimpaired powers of body and mind, at length she obtained from God an end befitting her pious course, and a recompense of her good deeds even in this present life.

Chapter XLIV. *Of Helena's Generosity and Beneficent Acts.*

For on the occasion of a circuit which she made of the eastern provinces, in the splendor of imperial authority, she bestowed abundant proofs of her liberality as well on the inhabitants of the several cities collectively, as on individuals who approached her, at the same time that she scattered largesses among the soldiery with a liberal hand. But especially abundant were the gifts she bestowed on the naked and unprotected poor. To some she gave money, to others an ample supply of clothing: she liberated some from imprisonment, or from the bitter servitude of the mines; others she delivered from unjust oppression, and others again, she restored from exile.

Chapter XLV. *Helena's Pious Conduct in the Churches.*

While, however, her character derived luster from such deeds as I have described, she was far from neglecting personal piety toward God.[56] She might be seen continually frequenting his Church, while at the same time she adorned the houses of prayer with splendid offerings, not overlooking the churches of the smallest cities. In short, this admirable woman was to be seen, in simple and modest attire, mingling with the crowd of worshipers, and testifying her devotion to God by a uniform course of pious conduct.

Chapter XLVI. *How She Made Her Will, and Died at the Age of Eighty Years.*

And when at length at the close of a long life, she was called to inherit a happier lot, having arrived at the eightieth year of her age, and being very near the time of her departure, she prepared and executed her last will in favor of her only son, the emperor and sole monarch of the world, and her grandchildren, the Caesars his sons, to whom severally she bequeathed whatever property she possessed in any part of the world. Having thus made her will, this thrice blessed woman died in the presence of her illustrious son, who was in attendance at her side, caring for her and held her hands: so that, to those who rightly discerned the truth, the thrice blessed one seemed not to die, but to experience a real change and transition from an earthly to a heavenly existence, since her soul, remoulded as it were into an incorruptible and angelic essence,[57] was received up into her Saviour's presence.[58]

Chapter XLVII. *How Constantine Buried His Mother, and How He Honored Her During Her Life.*

Her body, too, was honored with special tokens of respect, being escorted on its way to the imperial city by a vast train of guards, and there deposited in a royal tomb. Such were the last days of our emperor's mother, a person worthy of being had in perpetual remembrance, both for her own practical piety, and because she had given birth to so extraordinary and admirable an offspring. And well may his character be styled blessed, for his filial piety as well as on other grounds. He rendered her through his influence so devout a worshiper of God, (though she had not previously been such,) that she seemed to have been instructed from the first by the Saviour of mankind: and besides this, he had honored her so fully with imperial dignities, that in every province,

and in the very ranks of the soldiery, she was spoken of under the titles of Augusta and empress, and her likeness was impressed on golden coins.[59] He had even granted her authority over the imperial treasures, to use and dispense them according to her own will and discretion in every case for this enviable distinction also she received at the hands of her son. Hence it is that among the qualities which shed a luster on his memory, we may rightly include that surpassing degree of filial affection whereby he rendered full obedience to the Divine precepts which enjoin due honor from children to their parents. In this manner, then, the emperor executed in Palestine the noble works I have above described: and indeed in every province he raised new churches on a far more imposing scale than those which had existed before his time.

Chapter XLVIII. *How He Built Churches in Honor of Martyrs, and Abolished Idolatry at Constantinople.*

And being fully resolved to distinguish the city which bore his name with especial honor, he embellished it with numerous sacred edifices, both memorials of martyrs on the largest scale, and other buildings of the most splendid kind, not only within the city itself, but in its vicinity: and thus at the same time he rendered honor to the memory of the martyrs, and consecrated his city to the martyrs' God. Being filled, too, with Divine wisdom, he determined to purgethe city which was to be distinguished by his own name from idolatry of every kind, that henceforth no statues might be worshiped there in the temples of those falsely reputed to be gods, nor any altars defiled by the pollution of blood: that there might be no sacrifices consumed by fire, no demon festivals, nor any of the other ceremonies usually observed by the superstitious.

Chapter XLIX. *Representation of the Cross in the Palace, and of Daniel at the Public Fountains.*

On the other hand one might see the fountains in the midst of the market place graced with figures representing the good Shepherd, well known to those who study the sacred oracles, and that of Daniel also with the lions, forged in brass, and resplendent with plates of gold. Indeed, so large a measure of Divine love possessed the emperor's soul, that in the principal apartment of the imperial palace itself, on a vast tablet[60] displayed in the center of its gold-covered paneled ceiling, he caused the symbol of our Saviour's Passion to be fixed, composed of a variety of precious stones richly inwrought with gold. This symbol he seemed to have intended to be as it were the safeguard of the empire itself.

Chapter L. *That He Erected Churches in Nicomedia, and in Other Cities.*

Having thus embellished the city which bore his name, he next distinguished the capital of Bithynia[61] by the erection of a stately and magnificent church, being desirous of raising in this city also, in honor of his Saviour and at his own charges, a memorial of his victory over his own enemies and the adversaries of God. He also decorated the principal cities of the other provinces with sacred edifices of great beauty; as, for example, in the case of that metropolis of the East which derived its name from Antiochus, in which, as the head of that portion of the empire, he consecrated to the service of God a church of unparalleled size and beauty. The entire building was encompassed by an enclosure of great extent, within which the church itself rose to a vast elevation, being of an octagonal form, and surrounded on all sides by many chambers, courts, and upper and lower apartments; the whole richly adorned with a profusion of

gold, brass, and other materials of the most costly kind.

Chapter LI. *That He Ordered a Church to Be Built at Mambre.*

Such was the principal sacred edifices erected by the emperor's command. But having heard that the self-same Saviour who erewhile had appeared on earth[62] had in ages long since past afforded a manifestation of his Divine presence to holy men of Palestine near the oak of Mambre,[63] he ordered that a house of prayer should be built there also in honor of the God who had thus appeared. Accordingly the imperial commission was transmitted to the provincial governors by letters addressed to them individually, enjoining a speedy completion of the appointed work. He sent moreover to the writer of this history an eloquent admonition, a copy of which I think it well to insert in the present work, in order to convey a just idea of his pious diligence and zeal. To express, then, his displeasure at the evil practices which he had heard were usual in the place just referred to, he addressed me in the following terms.

Chapter LII. *Constantine's Letter to Eusebius Concerning Mambre.*

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Macarius, and the rest of the bishops in Palestine.[64]

"One benefit, and that of no ordinary importance, has been conferred on us by my truly pious mother-in-law,[65] in that she has made known to us by letter that abandoned folly of impious men which has hitherto escaped detection by you: so that the criminal conduct thus overlooked may now through our means obtain fitting correction and remedy, necessary though ardy. For surely it is a grave impiety indeed, that holy places should be defiled by the stain of unhallowed impurities. What then is this, dearest brethren, which, though it has eluded your sagacity, she of whom I speak was impelled

by a pious sense of duty to disclose?

Chapter LIII. *That the Saviour Appeared in This Place to Abraham.*

"She assures me, then, that the place which takes its name from the oak of Mambre, where we find that Abraham dwelt, is defiled by certain of the slaves of superstition in every possible way. She declares that idols[66] which should be utterly destroyed have been erected on the site of that tree; that an altar is near the spot; and that impure sacrifices are continually performed. Now since it is evident that these practices are equally inconsistent with the character of our times, and unworthy the sanctity of the place itself, I wish your Gravities[67] to be informed that the illustrious Count Acacius, our friend, has received instructions by letter from me, to the effect that every idol which shall be found in the place above-mentioned shall immediately be consigned to the flames; that the altar be utterly demolished; and that if any one, after this our mandate, shall be guilty of impiety of any kind in this place, he shall be visited with condign punishment. The place itself we have directed to be adorned with an unpolluted structure, I mean a church; in order that it may become a fitting place of assembly for holy men. Meantime, should any breach of these our commands occur, it should be made known to our clemency without the least delay by letters from you, that we may direct the person detected to be dealt with, as a transgressor of the law, in the severest manner. For you are not ignorant that the Supreme God first appeared to Abraham, and conversed with him, in that place. There it was that the observance of the Divine law first began; there first the Saviour himself, with the two angels, vouchsafed to Abraham a manifestation of his presence; there God first appeared to men; there he gave promise to Abraham concerning his

future seed, and straightway fulfilled that promise; there he foretold that he should be the father of a multitude of nations. For these reasons, it seems to me right that this place should not only be kept pure through your diligence from all defilement, but restored also to its pristine sanctity; that nothing hereafter may be done there except the performance of fitting service to him who is the Almighty God, and our Saviour, and Lord of all. And this service it is incumbent on you to care for with due attention, if your Gravities be willing (and of this I feel confident) to gratify my wishes, which are especially interested in the worship of God. May he preserve you, beloved brethren!"

Chapter LIV. *Destruction of Idol Temples and Images Everywhere.*

All these things the emperor diligently performed to the praise of the saving power of Christ, and thus made it his constant aim to glorify his Saviour God. On the other hand he used every means to rebuke the superstitious errors of the heathen. Hence the entrances of their temples in the several cities were left exposed to the weather, being stripped of their doors at his command; the tiling of others was removed, and their roofs destroyed. From others again the venerable statues of brass, of which the superstition of antiquity had boasted for a long series of years, were exposed to view in all the public places of the imperial city: so that here a Pythian, there a Sminthian Apollo, excited the contempt of the beholder: while the Delphic tripods were deposited in the hippodrome and the Muses of Helicon in the palace itself. In short, the city which bore his name was everywhere filled with brazen statues of the most exquisite workmanship, which had been dedicated in every province, and which the deluded victims of superstition had long vainly honored as gods with

numberless victims and burnt sacrifices, though now at length they learnt to renounce their error, when the emperor held up the very objects of their worship to be the ridicule and sport of all beholders. With regard to those images which were of gold, he dealt with them in a different manner. For as soon as he understood that the ignorant multitudes were inspired with a vain and childish dread of these bugbears of error, wrought in gold and silver, he judged it right to remove these also, like stumbling-stones thrown in the way of men walking in the dark, and henceforward to open a royal road, plain and unobstructed to all. Having formed this resolution, he considered no soldiers or military force of any sort needful for the suppression of the evil: a few of his own friends sufficed for this service, and these he sent by a simple expression of his will to visit each several province. Accordingly, sustained by confidence in the emperor's pious intentions and their own personal devotion to God, they passed through the midst of numberless tribes and nations, abolishing this ancient error in every city and country. They ordered the priests themselves, amidst general laughter and scorn, to bring their gods from their dark recesses to the light of day: they then stripped them of their ornaments, and exhibited to the gaze of all the unsightly reality which had been hidden beneath a painted exterior. Lastly, whatever part of the material appeared valuable they scraped off and melted in the fire to prove its worth, after which they secured and set apart whatever they judged needful for their purpose, leaving to the superstitious worshipers that which was altogether useless, as a memorial of their shame. Meanwhile our admirable prince was himself engaged in a work similar to what we have described. For at the same time that these costly images of the dead were stripped, as we have said, of their precious materials, he

also attacked those composed of brass; causing those to be dragged from their places with ropes and as it were carried away captive, whom the dotage of mythology had esteemed as gods.

Chapter LV. *Overthrow of an Idol Temple, and Abolition of Licentious Practices, at Aphaca in Phoenicia.*

The emperor's next care was to kindle, as it were, a brilliant torch, by the light of which he directed his imperial gaze around, to see if any hidden vestiges of error might still exist. And as the keen-sighted eagle in its heavenward flight is able to descry from its lofty height the most distant objects on the earth, so did he, while residing in the imperial palace of his own fair city, discover as from a watch-tower a hidden and fatal snare of souls in the province of Phoenicia. This was a grove and temple, not situated in the midst of any city, nor in any public place, as for splendor of effect is generally the case, but apart from the beaten and frequented road, at Aphaca, on part of the summit of Mount Lebanon, and dedicated to the foul demon known by the name of Venus. It was a school of wickedness for all the votaries of impurity, and such as destroyed their bodies with effeminacy. Here men undeserving of the name forgot the dignity of their sex, and propitiated the demon by their effeminate conduct; here too unlawful commerce of women and adulterous intercourse, with other horrible and infamous practices, were perpetrated in this temple as in a place beyond the scope and restraint of law. Meantime these evils remained unchecked by the presence of any observer, since no one of fair character ventured to visit such scenes. These proceedings, however, could not escape the vigilance of our august emperor, who, having himself inspected them with characteristic forethought, and judging that such a temple

was unfit for the light of heaven, gave orders that the building with its offerings should be utterly destroyed. Accordingly, in obedience to the imperial command, these engines of an impure superstition were immediately abolished, and the hand of military force was made instrumental in purging the place. And now those who had heretofore lived without restraint learned self-control through the emperor's threat of punishment, as likewise those superstitious Gentiles wise in their own conceit, who now obtained experimental proof of their own folly.

Chapter LVI. *Destruction of the Temple of Aesculapius at Egaae.*[68]

For since a wide-spread error of these pretenders to wisdom concerned the demon worshiped in Cilicia, whom thousands regarded with reverence as the possessor of saving and healing power, who sometimes appeared to those who passed the night in his temple, sometimes restored the diseased to health, though on the contrary he was a destroyer of souls, who drew his easily deluded worshipers from the true Saviour to involve them in impious error, the emperor, consistently with his practice, and desire to advance the worship of him who is at once a jealous God and the true Saviour, gave directions that this temple also should be razed to the ground. In prompt obedience to this command, a band of soldiers laid this building, the admiration of noble philosophers, prostrate in the dust, together with its unseen inmate, neither demon nor god, but rather a deceiver of souls, who had seduced mankind for so long a time through various ages. And thus he who had promised to others deliverance from misfortune and distress, could find no means for his own security, any more than when, as is told in myth, he was scorched by the lightning's stroke.[69] Our emperor's pious deeds, however, had in them nothing fabulous or feigned; but by

virtue of the manifested power of his Saviour, this temple as well as others was so utterly overthrown, that not a vestige of the former follies was left behind.

Chapter LVII. *How the Gentiles Abandoned Idol Worship, and Turned to the Knowledge of God.*

Hence it was that, of those who had been the slaves of superstition, when they saw with their own eyes the exposure of their delusion, and beheld the actual ruin of the temples and images in every place, some applied themselves to the saving doctrine of Christ; while others, though they declined to take this step, yet reprobated the folly which they had received from their fathers, and laughed to scorn what they had so long been accustomed to regard as gods. Indeed, what other feelings could possess their minds, when they witnessed the thorough uncleanness concealed beneath the fair exterior of the objects of their worship? Beneath this were found either the bones of dead men or dry skulls, fraudulently adorned by the arts of magicians,[70] or filthy rags full of abominable impurity, or a bundle of hay or stubble. On seeing all these things heaped together within their lifeless images, they denounced their fathers' extreme folly and their own, especially when neither in the secret recesses of the temples nor in the statues themselves could any inmate be found; neither demon, nor utterer of oracles, neither god nor prophet, as they had heretofore supposed: nay, not even a dim and shadowy phantom could be seen. Accordingly, every gloomy cavern, every hidden recess, afforded easy access to the emperor's emissaries: the inaccessible and secret chambers, the innermost shrines of the temples, were trampled by the soldiers' feet; and thus the mental blindness which had prevailed for so many ages over the gentile world became clearly apparent to the eyes of all.

Chapter LVIII. *How He Destroyed the Temple of Venus at Heliopolis, and Built the First Church in that City.*

Such actions as I have described may well be reckoned among the emperor's noblest achievements, as also the wise arrangements which he made respecting each particular province. We may instance the Phoenician city Heliopolis, in which those who dignify licentious pleasure with a distinguishing title of honor, had permitted their wives and daughters to commit shameless fornication. But now a new statute, breathing the very spirit of modesty, proceeded from the emperor, which peremptorily forbade the con- tinuance of former practices. And besides this he sent them also written exhortations, as though he had been especially ordained by God for this end, that he might instruct all men in the principles of chastity. Hence, he disdained not to communicate by letter even with these persons, urging them to seek diligently the knowledge of God. At the same time he followed up his words by corresponding deeds, and erected even in this city a church of great size and magnificence: so that an event unheard of before in any age, now for the first time came to pass, namely, that a city which had hitherto been wholly given up to superstition now obtained the privilege of a church of God, with presbyters and deacons, and its people were placed under the presiding care of a bishop consecrated to the service of the supreme God. And further, the emperor, being anxious that here also as many as possible might be won to the truth, bestowed abundant provision for the necessities of the poor, desiring even thus to invite them to seek the doctrines of salvation, as though he were almost adopting the words of him who said, "Whether in pretense, or in truth, let Christ be preached."[71]

Chapter LIX. *Of the Disturbance at Antioch by Eustathius.*

In the midst, however, of the general happiness occasioned by these events, and while the Church of God was every where and every way flourishing throughout the empire, once more that spirit of envy, who ever watches for the ruin of the good, prepared himself to combat the greatness of our prosperity, in the expectation, perhaps, that the emperor himself, provoked by our tumults and disorders, might eventually become estranged from us. Accordingly, he kindled a furious controversy at Antioch, and thereby involved the church in that place in a series of tragic calamities, which had well-nigh occasioned the total overthrow of the city. The members of the Church were divided into two opposite parties; while the people, including even the magistrates and soldiery, were roused to such a pitch, that the contest would have been decided by the sword, had not the watchful providence of God, as well as dread of the emperor's displeasure, controlled the fury of the multitude. On this occasion, too, the emperor, acting the part of a preserver and physician of souls, applied with much forbearance the remedy of persuasion to those who needed it. He gently pleaded, as it were by an embassy, with his people, sending among them oneof the best approved and most faithful of those who were honored with the dignity of Count;[72] at the same time that he exhorted them to a peaceable spirit by repeated letters, and instructed them in the practice of true godliness, Having prevailed by these remonstrances, he excused their conduct in his subsequent letters, alleging that he had himself heard the merits of the case from him on whose account the disturbance had arisen.[73] And these letters of his, which are replete with learning and instruction of no ordinary kind, I should have inserted in

this present work, were it not that they might affix a mark of dishonor to the character of the persons accused. I will therefore omit these, being unwilling to revive the memory of past grievances, and will only annex those to my present narrative which he wrote to testify his satisfaction at the re-establishment of peace and concord among the rest. In these letters, he cautioned them against any desire to claim the ruler of another district,[74] through whose intervention peace had been restored, as their own, and exhorted them, consistently with the usage of the Church, to choose him as their bishop, whom the common Saviour of all should point out as suited for the office. His letter, then, is addressed to the people and to the bishops, severally, in the following terms.

Chapter LX. *Constantine's Letter to the Antiochians, Directing Them Not to Withdraw Eusebius from Caesarea, But to Seek Some One Else.*

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to the people of Antioch.

2 "How pleasing to the wise and intelligent portion of mankind is the concord which exists among you! And I myself, brethren, am disposed to love you with an enduring affection, inspired both by religion, and by your own manner of life and zeal on my behalf. It is by the exercise of right understanding and sound discretion, that we are enabled really to enjoy our blessings. And what can become you so well as i this discretion? No wonder, then, if I affirm that your maintenance of the truth has tended rather to promote your security than to draw on you the hatred of others. Indeed, amongst brethren, whom the selfsame disposition to walk in the ways of truth and righteousness promises, through the favor of God, to register among his pure and holy family, what can be more honorable than gladly to acquiesce in the

prosperity of all men? Especially since the precepts of the divine law prescribe a better direction to your proposed intention, and we ourselves desire that your judgment should be confirmed by proper sanction.[75] It may be that you are surprised, and at a loss to understand the meaning of this introduction to my present address. The cause of it I will not hesitate to explain without reserve. I confess, then, that on reading your records I perceived, by the highly eulogistic testimony which they bear to Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, whom I have myself long well known and esteemed for his learning and moderation, that you are strongly attached to him, and desire to appropriate him as your own. What thoughts, then, do you suppose that I entertain on this subject, desirous as I am to seek for and act on the strict principles of right? What anxiety do you imagine this desire of yours has caused me? O holy faith, who givest us in our Saviour's words and precepts a model, as it were, of what our life should be, how hardly wouldst thou thyself resist the sins of men, were it not that thou refusest to subserve the purposes of gain! In my own judgment, he whose first object is the maintenance of peace, seems to be superior to Victory herself; and where a right and honorable course lies open to one's choice, surely no one would hesitate to adopt it. I ask then, brethren, why do we so decide as to inflict an injury on others by our choice? Why do we covet those objects which will destroy the credit of our own reputation? I myself highly esteem the individual whom ye judge worthy of your respect and affection: notwithstanding, it cannot be right that those principles should be entirely disregarded which should be authoritative and binding on all alike, so that each should not be content with his own circumstances, and all enjoy their proper privileges: nor can it be right, in considering the claims of rival

candidates, to suppose but that not one only, but many, may appear worthy of comparison with this person. For as long as no violence or harshness are suffered to disturb the dignities of the church, they continue to be on an equal footing, and worthy of the same consideration everywhere. Nor is it reasonable that an inquiry into the qualifications of this one should be made to the detriment of others; since the judgment of all churches, whether reckoned of greater or less importance in themselves, is equally capable of receiving and maintaining the divine ordinances, so that one is in no way inferior to another, if we will but boldly declare the truth, in regard to that standard of practice which is common to all. If this be so, we must say that you will be chargeable, not with retaining this prelate, but with wrongfully removing him; your conduct will be characterized rather by violence than justice; and whatever may be generally thought by others, I dare clearly and boldly affirm that this measure will furnish ground of accusation against you, and will provoke factious disturbances of the most mischievous kind: for even timid flocks can show the use and power of their teeth, when the watchful care of their shepherd declines, and they find themselves bereft of his accustomed guidance. If this then be really so, if I am not deceived in my judgment, let this, brethren, be your first consideration, for many and important considerations will immediately present themselves, whether, should you persist in your intention, that mutual kindly feeling and affection which should subsist among you will suffer no diminution? In the next place, remember that he, who came among you for the purpose of offering disinterested counsel,[76] now enjoys the reward which is due to him in the judgment of heaven; for he has received no ordinary recompense in the high testimony you have borne to his equitable conduct. Lastly, in accordance with your usual

sound judgment, do ye exhibit a becoming diligence in selecting the person of whom you stand in need, carefully avoiding all factious and tumultuous clamor; for such clamor is always wrong, and from the collision of discordant elements both sparks and flame will arise. I protest, as I desire to please God and you, and to enjoy a happiness commensurate with your kind wishes, that I love you, and the quiet haven of your gentleness, now that you have cast from you that which defiled,[77] and received in its place at once sound morality and concord, firmly planting in the vessel the sacred standard, and guided, as one may say, by a helm of iron in your course onward to the light of heaven. Receive then on board that merchandise which is incorruptible, since, as it were, all bilge water has been drained from the vessel; and be careful henceforth so to secure the enjoyment of all your present blessing, that you may not seem at any future time either to have determined any measure on the impulse of inconsiderate or ill-directed zeal, or in the first instance rashly to have entered on an inexpedient course. May God preserve you, beloved brethren!"

Chapter LXI. *The Emperor's Letter to Eusebius Praising Him for Refusing the Bishopric of Antioch.*

The Emperor's Letter to me on my refusing the Bishopric of Antioch.

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Eusebius.

"I have most carefully perused your letter, and perceive that you have strictly conformed to the rule enjoined by the discipline of the Church. Now to abide by that which appears at the same time pleasing to God, and accordant with apostolical tradition, is a proof of true piety. You have reason to deem yourself happy on this behalf, that you are counted worthy, in the judgment, I may say, of all the world, to have the oversight of any church. For the

desire which all feel to claim you for their own, undoubtedly enhances your enviable fortune in this respect. Notwithstanding, your Prudence whose resolve it is to observe the ordinances of God and the apostolic canon of the Church,[78] has done excellently well in declining the bishopric of the church at Antioch, and desiring to continue in that church of which you first received the oversight by the will of God. I have written on this subject to the people of Antioch, and also to your colleagues in the ministry who had themselves consulted me in regard to this question; on reading which letters, your Holiness will easily discern, that, inasmuch as justice itself opposed their claims, I have written to them under divine direction. It will be necessary that your Prudence should be present at their conference, in order that this decision may be ratified in the church at Antioch. God preserve you, beloved brother!"

Chapter LXII. *Constantine's Letter to the Council, Depreciating the Removal of Eusebius from Caesarea.*

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Theodotus, Theodorus, Narcissus, Atius, Alpheus, and the rest of the bishops who are at Antioch.

"I have perused the letters written by your Prudences, and highly approve of the wise resolution of your colleague in the ministry, Eusebius. Having, moreover, been informed of the circumstances of the case, partly by your letters, partly by those of our illustrious counts,[79] Acacius and Strategius, after sufficient investigation I have written to the people of Antioch, suggesting the course which will be at once pleasing to God and advantageous for the Church. A copy of this I have ordered to be subjoined to this present letter, in order that ye yourselves may know what I thought fit, as an advocate of the cause of justice, to write to that people:

since I find in your letter this proposal, that, in consonance with the choice of the people, sanctioned by your own desire, Eusebius the holy bishop of Caesarea should preside over and take the charge of the church at Antioch. Now the letters of Eusebius himself on this subject appeared to be strictly accordant with the order prescribed by the Church. Nevertheless it is expedient that your Prudences should be made acquainted with my opinion also. For I am informed that Euphronius the presbyter, who isa citizen of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and George of Arethusa, likewise a presbyter, and appointed to that office by Alexander at Alexandria,[80] are men of tried faith. It was right, therefore, to intimate to your Prudences, that in proposing these men and any others whom you may deem worthy the episcopal dignity, you should decide this question in a manner conformable to the tradition of the apostles. For in that case, your Prudences will be able, according to the rule of the Church and apostolic tradition, to direct this election in the manner which true ecclesiastical discipline shall prescribe. God preserve you, beloved brethren!"

Chapter LXIII. *How He Displayed His Zeal for the Extirpation of Heresies.*

Such were the exhortations to do all things to the honor of the divine religion which the emperor addressed to the rulers of the churches. Having by these means banished dissension, and reduced the Church of God to a state of uniform harmony, he next proceeded to a different duty, feeling it incumbent on him to extirpate another sort of impious persons, as pernicious enemies of the human race. These were pests of society, who ruined whole cities under the specious garb of religious decorum; men whom our Saviour's warning voice somewhere terms false prophets and ravenous wolves: "Beware of false prophets, which will come to you in sheep's clothing, but

inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them."[81] Accordingly, by an order transmitted to the governors of the several provinces, he effectually banished all such offenders. In addition to this ordinance he addressed to them personally a severely awakening admonition, exhorting them to an earnest repentance, that they might still find a haven of safety in the true Church of God. Hear, then, in what manner he addressed them in this letter.

Chapter LXIV. *Constantine's Edict Against the Heretics.*

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to the heretics.

"Understand now, by this present statute, ye Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians, ye who are called Cataphrygians,[82] and all ye who devise and support heresies by means of your private assemblies, with what a tissue of falsehood and vanity, with what destructive and venomous errors, your doctrines are inseparably interwoven; so that through you the healthy soul is stricken with disease, and the living becomes the prey of everlasting death. Ye haters and enemies of truth and life, in league with destruction! All your counsels are opposed to the truth, but familiar with deeds of baseness; full of absurdities and fictions: and by these ye frame falsehoods, oppress the innocent, and withhold the light from them that believe. Ever trespassing under the mask of godliness, ye fill all things with defilement: ye pierce the pure and guileless conscience with deadly wounds, while ye withdraw, one may almost say, the very light of day from the eyes of men. But why should I particularize, when to speak of your criminality as it deserves demands more time and leisure than I can give? For so long and unmeasured is the catalogue of your offenses, so hateful and altogether atrocious are they, that a single day would

not suffice to recount them all. And, indeed, it is well to turn one's ears and eyes from such a subject, lest by a description of each particular evil, the pure sincerity and freshness of one's own faith be impaired. Why then do I still bear with such abounding evil; especially since this protracted clemency is the cause that some who were sound are become tainted with this pestilent disease? Why not at once strike, as it were, at the root of so great a mischief by a public manifestation of displeasure?

Chapter LXV. *The Heretics are Deprived of Their Meeting Places.*

"Forasmuch, then, as it is no longer possible to bear with your pernicious errors, we give warning by this present statute that none of you henceforth presume to assemble yourselves together.[83] We have directed, accordingly, that you be deprived of all the houses in which you are accustomed to hold your assemblies: and our care in this respect extends so far as to forbid the holding of your superstitious and senseless meetings, not in public merely, but in any private house or place whatsoever. Let those of you, therefore, who are desirous of embracing the true and pure religion, take the far better course of entering the catholic Church, and uniting with it in holy fellowship, whereby you will be enabled to arrive at the knowledge of the truth. In any case, the delusions of your perverted understandings must entirely cease to mingle with and mar the felicity of our present times: I mean the impious and wretched double-mindedness of heretics and schismatics. For it is an object worthy of that prosperity which we enjoy through the favor of God, to endeavor to bring back those who in time past were living in the hope of future blessing, from all irregularity and error to the right path, from darkness to light, from vanity to truth, from death to salvation. And in order that this remedy may be applied with effectual power, we have

commanded, as before said, that you be positively deprived of every gathering point for your superstitious meetings, I mean all the houses of prayer, if such be worthy of the name, which belong to heretics, and that these be made over without delay to the catholic Church; that any other places be confiscated to the public service, and no facility whatever be left for any future gathering; in order that from this day forward none of your unlawful assemblies may presume to appear in any public or private place. Let this edict be made public."

Chapter LXVI. *How on the Discovery of Prohibited Books Among the Heretics, Many of Them Return to the Catholic Church.*

Thus were the lurking-places of the heretics broken up by the emperor's command, and the savage beasts they harbored (I mean the chief authors of their impious doctrines) driven to flight. Of those whom they had deceived, some, intimidated by the emperor's threats, disguising their real sentiments, crept secretly into the Church. For since the law directed that search should be made for their books, those of them who practiced evil and forbidden arts were detected, and, these were ready to secure their own safety by dissimulation of every kind.[84] Others, however, there were, who voluntarily and with real sincerity embraced a better hope. Meantime the prelates of the several churches. continued to make strict inquiry, utterly rejecting those who attempted an entrance under the specious disguise of false pretenses, while those who came with sincerity of purpose were proved for a time, and after sufficient trial numbered with the congregation. Such was the treatment of those who stood charged with rank heresy: those, however, who maintained no impious doctrine, but had been separated from the one body through the influence of schismatic advisers, were received without difficulty or delay.

Accordingly, numbers thus revisited, as it were, their own country after an absence in a foreign land, and acknowledged the Church as a mother from whom they had wandered long, and to whom they now returned with joy and gladness. Thus the members of the entire body became united, and compacted in one harmonious whole; and the one catholic Church, at unity with itself, shone with full luster, while no heretical or schismatic body anywhere continued to exist.[85] And the credit of having achieved this mighty work our Heaven-protected emperor alone, of all who had gone before him, was able to attribute to himself.

Book IV.

Chapter I. *How He Honored Many by Presents and Promotions.*

1 While thus variously engaged in promoting the extension and glory of the church of God, and striving by every measure to commend the Saviour's doctrine, the emperor was far from neglecting secular affairs; but in this respect also he was unwearied in bestowing benefits of every kind and in quick succession on the people of every province. On the one hand he manifested a paternal anxiety for the general welfare of his subjects; on the other he would distinguish individuals of his own acquaintance with various marks of honor; conferring his benefits in every instance in a truly noble spirit. No one could request a favor from the emperor, and fail of obtaining what he sought: no one expected a boon from him, and found that expectation vain.[1] Some received presents in money, others in land; some obtained the Praetorian praefecture, others senatorial, others again consular rank: many were appointed provincial governors: others were made counts of the first, second, or third order: in numberless instances the title of Most Illustrious and many other distinctions were conferred;

for the emperor devised new dignities, that he might invest a larger number with the tokens of his favor.

Chapter II. *Remission of a Fourth Part of the Taxes.*

1 The extent to which he studied the general happiness and prosperity may be understood from a single instance most beneficial and universal in its application, and still gratefully remembered. He remitted a fourth part of the yearly tribute paid for land, and bestowed it on the owners of the soil; so that if we compute this yearly reduction, we shall find that the cultivators enjoyed their produce free of tribute every fourth year.[2] This privilege being established by law, and secured for the time to come, has given occasion for the emperor's beneficence to be held, not merely by the then present generation, but by their children and descendants, in perpetual remembrance.

Chapter III. *Equalization of the More Oppressive Taxes.*

1 And whereas some persons found fault with the surveys of land which had been made under former emperors, and complained that their property was unduly burdened; acting in this case also on the principles of justice, he sent commissioners to equalize the tribute, and to secure immunity to those who had made this. appeal.

Chapter IV. *His Liberality, from His Private Resources, to the Losers in Suits of a Pecuniary Nature.*

1 In cases of judicial arbitration, in order that the loser by his decision might not quit his presence less contented than the victorious litigant, he himself bestowed, and from his own private means in some cases lands, in other money, on the defeated party. In this manner he took care that the loser, as having appeared in his presence, should be as well satisfied as the gainer of the cause; for he

considered that no one ought in any case to retire dejected and sorrowful from an interview with such a price.[3] Thus it happened that both parties returned from the scene of trial with glad and cheerful countenances, while the emperor's noble-minded liberality excited universal admiration.

Chapter V. *Conquest of the Scythians Defeated Through the Sign of Our Saviour.*

1 And why should I relate even briefly and incidentally, how he subjected barbarous nations to the Roman power; how he was the first who subjugated the Scytian[4] and Sarmatian tribes, which had never learned submission, and compelled them, how unwilling soever, to own the sovereignitiy of Rome? for the emperors who preceded him had actually rendered tribute to the Scythians: and Romans, by an annual payment, had confessed themselves servants to barbarians; an indignity which our emperor could no longer bear, nor think it consistent with his victorious career to continue the payment his predecessors had made. Accordingly, with full confidence in his Saviour's aid, he raised his conquering standard against these enemies also, and soon reduced them all to obedience; coercing by military force those who fiercely resisted his authority, while, on the other hand, he conciliated the rest by wisely conducted embassies, and reclaimed them to a state of order and civilization from their lawless and savage life. Thus the Scythians at length learned to acknowledge subjection to the power of Rome.

Chapter VI. *Conquest of the Sarmatians, Consequent on the Rebellion of Their Slaves.*

1 With respect to the Sarmatians, God himself brought them beneath the rule of Constantine, and subdued a nation swelling with barbaric pride in the following manner. Being attacked by the Scythians, they had

entrusted their slaves with arms, in order to repel the enemy. These slaves first overcame the invaders and then, turning their weapons against their masters, drove them all from their native land. The expelled Sarmatians found that their only hope of safety was in Constantine's protection: and he, whose familiar habit it was to save men's lives, received them all within the confines of the Roman empire.[5] Those who were capable of serving he incorporated with his own troops: to the rest he allotted lands to cultivate for their own support: so that they themselves acknowledged that their past misfortune had produced a happy result, in that they now enjoyed Roman liberty in place of savage barbarism. In this manner God added to his dominions many and various barbaric tribes.

Chapter VII. *Ambassadors from Different Barbarous Nations Receive Presents from the Emperor.*

1 Indeed, ambassadors were continually arriving from all nations, bringing for his acceptance their most precious gifts. So that I myself have sometimes stood near the entrance of the imperial palace, and observed a noticeable array of barbarians in attendance, differing from each other in costume and decorations, and equally unlike in the fashion of their hair and beard. Their aspect truculent and terrible, their bodily stature prodigious: some of a red complexion, others white as snow, others again of an intermediate color. For in the number of those I have referred to might be seen specimens of the Blemmyan tribes, of the Indians, and the Ethiopians,[6] "that widely-divided race, remotest of mankind." All these in due succession, like some painted pageant, presented to the emperor those gifts which their own nation held in most esteem; some offering crowns of gold, others diadems set with precious stones; some bringing fair-haired boys, others barbaric vestments

embroidered with gold and flowers: some appeared with horses, others with shields and long spears, with arrows and bows, thereby offering their services and alliance for the emperor's acceptance. These presents he separately received and carefully laid aside, acknowledging them in so munificent a manner as at once to enrich those who bore them. He also honored the noblest among them with Roman offices of dignity; so that many of them thenceforward preferred to continue their residence among us, and felt no desire to revisit their native land.

Chapter VIII. *That He Wrote Also to the King of Persia*[7] *Who Had Sent Him an Embassy, on Behalf of the Christians in His Realm.*

1 The king of the Persians also having testified a desire to form an alliance with Constantine, by sending an embassy and presents as assurances of peace and friendship, the emperor, in negotiating this treaty, far surpassed the monarch who had first done him honor, in the magnificence with which he acknowledged his gifts. Having heard, too, that there were many churches of God in Persia, and that large numbers there were gathered into the fold of Christ, full of joy at this intelligence, he resolved to extend his anxiety for the general welfare to that country also, as one whose aim it was to care for all alike in every nation.

Chapter IX. *Letter of Constantine Augustus to Sapor, King of the Persians, Containing a Truly Pious Confession of God and Christ. Copy of His Letter to the King of Persia.*

1 "By keeping the Divine faith, I am made a partaker of the light of truth: guided by the light of truth, I advance in the knowledge of the Divine faith. Hence it is that, as my actions themselves evince, I profess the most holy religion; and this worship I declare to be that which teaches me deeper acquaintance with the most holy God;

aided by whose Divine power, beginning from the very borders of the ocean, I have aroused each nation of the world in succession to a well-grounded hope of security; so that those which, groaning in servitude to the most cruel tyrants and yielding to the pressure of their daily sufferings, had well nigh been utterly destroyed, have been restored through my agency to a far happier state. This God I confess that I hold in unceasing honor and remembrance; this God I delight to contemplate with pure and guileless thoughts in the height of his glory.

Chapter X. *The Writer Denounces Idols, and Glorifies God.*

1 "This God I invoke with bended knees, and recoil with horror from the blood of sacrifices from their foul and detestable odors, and from every earth-born magic fire:[8] for the profane and impious superstitions which are defiled by these rites have cast down and consigned to perdition many, nay, whole nations of the Gentile world. For he who is Lord of all cannot endure that those blessings which, in his own loving-kindness and consideration of the wants of men, he has revealed for the use of all, should be perverted to serve the lusts of any. His only demand from man is purity of mind and an undefiled spirit; and by this standard he weighs the actions of virtue and godliness. For his pleasure is in works of moderation and gentleness: he loves the meek, and hates the turbulent spirit: delighting in faith, he chastises unbelief: by him all presumptuous power is broken down, and he avenges the insolence of the proud. While the arrogant and haughty are utterly overthrown, he requires the humble and forgiving with deserved rewards: even so does he highly honor and strengthen with his special help a kingdom justly governed, and maintains a prudent king in the tranquillity of peace.

Chapter XI. *Against the Tyrants and*

Persecutors; And on the Captivity of Valerian.

1 "I Cannot, then, my brother believe that I err in acknowledging this one God, the author and parent of all things: whom many of my predecessors in power, led astray by the madness of error, have ventured to deny, but who were all visited with a retribution so terrible and so destructive, that all succeeding generations have held up their calamities as the most effectual warning to any who desire to follow in their steps. Of the number of these I believe him[9] to have been, whom the lightning-stroke of Divine vengeance drove forth from hence, and banished to your dominions and whose disgrace contributed to the fame of your celebrated triumph.

Chapter XII. *He Declares That, Having Witnessed the Fall of the Persecutors, He Now Rejoices at the Peace Enjoyed by the Christians.*

1 "And it is surely a happy circumstance that the punishment of such persons as I have described should have been publicly manifested in our own times. For I myself have witnessed the end of those who lately harassed the worshipers of God by their impious edict. And for this abundant thanksgivings are due to God that through his excellent Providence all men who observe his holy laws are gladdened by the renewed enjoyment of peace. Hence I am fully persuaded that everything is in the best and safest posture, since God is vouchsafing, through the influence of their pure and faithful religious service, and their unity of judgment respecting his Divine character, to gather all men to himself.

Chapter XIII. *He Bespeaks His Affectionate Interest for He Christians in His Country.*

1 "Imagine, then, with what joy I heard tidings so accordant with my desire, that the fairest districts of Persia are filled with those men on whose behalf alone I

am at present speaking, I mean the Christians. I pray, therefore, that both you and they may enjoy abundant prosperity, and that your blessings and theirs may be in equal measure;[10] for thus you will experience the mercy and favor of that God who is the Lord and Father of all. And now, because your power is great, I commend these persons to your protection;because your piety is eminent, I commit them to your care. Cherish them with your wonted humanity and kindness; for by this proof of faith you will secure an immeasurable benefit both to yourself and us."

Chapter XIV. *How the Zealous Prayers of Constantine Procured Peace to the Christians.*

1 Thus, the nations of the world being everywhere guided in their course as it were by the skill of a single pilot, and acquiescing in the administration of him who governed as the servant of God, the peace of the Roman empire continued undisturbed, and all classes of his subjects enjoyed a life of tranquillity and repose. At the same time the emperor, who was convinced that the prayers of godly men contributed powerfully to the maintenance of the public welfare, felt himself constrained zealously to seek such prayers and not only himself implored the help and favor of God, but charged the prelates of the churches to offer supplications on his behalf.

Chapter XV. *He Causes Himself to Be Represented on His Coins, and in His Portraits, in the Attitude of Prayer.*

1 How deeply his soul was impressed by the power of divine faith may be understood from the circumstance that he directed his likeness to be stamped on the golden coin of the empire with the eyes uplifted as in the posture of prayer to God: and this money became current throughout the Roman world. His portrait also at full length was placed over the entrance gates of the palaces

in some cities, the eyes upraised to heaven, and the hands outspread as if in prayer.

Chapter XVI. *He Forbids by Law the Plating His Likeness in Idol Temples.*

1 In this manner he represented himself, even through the medium of painting, as habitually engaged in prayer to God. At the same time he forbade, by an express enactment, the setting up of any resemblance of himself in any idol temple, that not even the mere lineaments of his person might receive contamination from the error of forbidden superstition.

Chapter XVII. *Of His Prayers in the Palace, and His Reading the Holy Scriptures.*

1 Still nobler proofs of his piety might be discerned by those who marked how he modeled as it were his very palace into a church of God, and himself afforded a pattern of zeal to those assembled therein: how he took the sacred scriptures into his hands, and devoted himself to the study of those divinely inspired oracles; after which he would offer up regular prayers with all the members of his imperial court.

Chapter XVIII. *He Enjoins the General Observance of the Lord's Day, and the Day of Preparation.*

1 He ordained, too, that one day should be regarded as a special occasion for prayer: I mean that which is truly the first and chief of all, the day of our Lord and Saviour. The entire care of his household was entrusted to deacons and other ministers consecrated to the service of God, and distinguished by gravity of life and every other virtue: while his trusty body guard, strong in affection and fidelity to his person, found in their emperor an instructor in the practice of piety, and like him held the Lord's salutary day in honor and performed on that day the devotions which he loved. The same observance was

recommended by this blessed prince to all classes of his subjects: his earnest desire being gradually to lead all mankind to the worship of God. Accordingly he enjoined on all the subjects of the Roman empire to observe the Lord's day, as a day of rest, and also to honor the day which precedes the Sabbath; in memory, I suppose, of what the Saviour of mankind is recorded to have achieved on that day.[11] And since his desire was to teach his whole army zealously to honor the Saviour's day (which derives its name from light, and from the sun),[12] he freely granted to those among them who were partakers of the divine faith, leisure for attendance on the services of the Church of God, in order that they might be able, without impediment, to perform their religious worship.

Chapter XIX. *That He Directed Even His Pagan Soldiers to Pray on the Lord's Day.*

1 With regard to those who were as yet ignorant of divine truth, he provided by a second statute that they should appear on each Lord's day on an open plain near the city, and there, at a given signal, offer to God with one accord a prayer which they had previously learnt. He admonished them that their confidence should not rest in their spears, or armor, or bodily strength, but that they should acknowledge the supreme God as the giver of every good, and of victory itself; to whom they were bound to offer their prayers with due regularity, uplifting their hands toward heaven, and raising their mental vision higher still to the king of heaven, on whom they should call as the Author of victory, their Preserver, Guardian, and Helper.The emperor himself prescribed the prayer to be used by all his troops, commanding them, to pronounce the following words in the Latin tongue:

Chapter XX. *The Form of Prayer Given by*

Constantine to His Soldiers.

1 "We acknowledge thee the only God: we own thee, as our King and implore thy succor. By thy favor have we gotten the victory through thee are we mightier than our enemies. We render thanks for thy past benefits, and trust thee for future blessings. Together we pray to thee, and beseech thee long to preserve to us, safe and triumphant, our emperor Constantine and his pious sons." Such was the duty to be performed on Sunday by his troops, and such the prayer they were instructed to offer up to God.

Chapter XXI. *He Orders the Sign of the Saviour's Cross to Be Engraven on His Soldiers' Shields.*

1 And not only so, but he also caused the sign of the salutary trophy to be impressed on the very shields of his soldiers; and commanded that his embattled forces should be preceded in their march, not by golden images, as heretofore,[13] but only by the standard of the cross.

Chapter XXII. *Of His Zeal in Prayer, and the Honor He Paid to the Feast of Easter.*

1 The emperor himself, as a sharer in the holy mysteries of our religion, would seclude himself daily at a stated hour in the innermost chambers of his palace; and there in solitary converse with his God, would kneel in humble supplication, and entreat the blessings of which he stood in need. But especially at the salutary feast of Easter, his religious diligence was redoubled; he fulfilled as it were the duties of a hierophant with every energy of his mind and body, and outvied all others in the zealous celebration of this feast. He changed, too, the holy night vigil into a brightness like that of day, by causing waxen tapers of great length to be lighted throughout the city: besides which, torches everywhere diffused their light, so as to impart to this mystic vigil a brilliant splendor beyond that of day.[14] As soon as day itself returned, in

imitation of our Saviour's gracious acts, he opened a liberal hand to his subjects of every nation, province, and people, and lavished abundant bounties on all.

Chapter XXIII. *How He Forbade Idolatrous Worship, But Honored Martyrs and the Church Festivals.*

1 Such were his sacred ministrations in the service of his God. At the same time, his subjects, both civil and military, throughout the empire, found a barrier everywhere opposed against idol worship, and every kind of sacrifice forbidden.[15] A statute was also passed, enjoining the due observance of the Lord's day, and transmitted to the governors of every province, who undertook, at the emperor's command, to respect the days commemorative of martyrs, and duly to honor the festal seasons in the churches:[16] and all these intentions were fullfilled to the emperor's entire satisfaction.

Chapter XXIV. *That He Described Himself to Be a Bishop, in Charge of Affairs External to the Church.*

1 Hence it was not without reason that once, on the occasion of his entertaining a company of bishops, he let fall the expression, "that he himself too was a bishop," addressing them in my hearing in the following words: "You are bishops whose jurisdiction is within the Church: I also am a bishop, ordained by God to overlook whatever is external to the Church."[17] And truly his measures corresponded with his words: for he watched over his subjects with an episcopal care, and exhorted them as far as in him lay to follow a godly life.

Chapter XXV. *Prohibition of Sacrifices, of Mystic Rites, Combats of Gladiators, Also the Licentious Worship of the Nile.*

1 Consistently with this zeal he issued successive laws and ordinances, forbidding any to offer sacrifice to idols,

to consult diviners, to erect images, or to pollute the cities with the sanguinary combats of gladiators.[18] And inasmuch as the Egyptians, especially those of Alexandria, had been accustomed to honor their river through a priesthood composed of effeminate men, a further law was passed commanding the extermination of the whole class as vicious, that no one might thenceforward be found tainted with the like impurity. And whereas the superstitious inhabitants apprehended that the river would in consequence withhold its customary flood, God himself showed his approval of the emperor's law by ordering all things in a manner quite contrary to their expectation. For those who had defiled the cities by their vicious conduct were indeed seen no more; but the river, as if the country through which it flowed had been purified to receive it, rose higher than ever before, and completely overflowed the country with its fertilizing streams: thus effectually admonishing the deluded people to turn from impure men, and ascribe their prosperity to him alone who is the Giver of all good.

Chapter XXVI. *Amendment of the Law in Force Respecting Childless Persons, and of the Law of Wills.*

1 So numerous, indeed, were the benefits of this kind conferred by the emperor on every province, as to afford ample materials to any who might desire to record them. Among these may be instanced those laws which he entirely remodelled, and established on a more equitable basis: the nature of which reform may be briefly and easily explained. The childless were punished under the old law with the forfeiture of their hereditary property a merciless statute, which dealt with them as positive criminals. The emperor annulled this, and decreed that those so circumstanced should inherit. He regulated the question on the principles of equity and justice, arguing

willful transgressors should be chastised with the penalties their crimes deserve. But nature herself denies children to many, who long, perhaps, for a numerous offspring, but are disappointed of their hope by bodily infirmity. Others continue childless, not from any dislike of posterity, but because their ardent love of philosophy[19] renders them averse to the conjugal union. Women, too, consecrated to the service of God, have maintained a pure and spotless virginity, and have devoted themselves, soul and body to a life of entire chastity and holiness. What then? Should this conduct be deemed worthy of punishment, or rather of admiration and praise; since to desire this state is in itself honorable, and to maintain it surpasses the power of unassisted nature? Surely those whose bodily infirmity destroys their hope of offspring are worthy of pity, not of punishment: and he who devotes himself to a higher object calls not for chastisement, but especial admiration. On such principles of sound reason did the emperor rectify the defects of this law. Again, with regard to the wills of dying persons, the old laws had ordained that they should be expressed, even at the latest breath, as it were, in certain definite words, and had prescribed the exact form and terms to be employed. This practice had occasioned many fraudulent attempts to hinder the intentions of the deceased from being carried into full effect. As soon as our emperor was aware of these abuses, he reformed this law likewise, declaring that a dying man ought to be permitted to indicate his last wishes in as few words as possible, and in whatever terms he pleased; and to set forth his will in any written form; or even by word of mouth, provided it were done in the presence of proper witnesses, who might be competent faithfully to discharge their trust.

Chapter XXVII. *Among Other Enactments, He*

Decrees that No Christian Shall Slave to a Jew, and Affirms the Validity of the Decisions of Councils.

1 He also passed a law to the effect that no Christian should remain in servitude to a Jewish master, on the ground that it could not be right that those whom the Saviour had ransomed should be subjected to the yoke of slavery by a people who had slain the prophets and the Lord himself. If any were found hereafter in these circumstances, the slave was to be set at liberty, and the master punished by a fine.

2 He likewise added the sanction of his authority to the decisions of bishops passed at their synods, and forbade the provincial governors to annul any of their decrees: for he rated the priests of God at a higher value than any judge whatever. These and a thousand similar provisions did he enact for the benefit of his subjects; but there is not time now to give a special description of them, such as might convey an accurate idea of his imperial wisdom in these respects: nor need I now relate at length, how, as a devoted servant of the Supreme God, he employed himself from morning until night in seeking objects for his beneficence, and how equally and universally kind he was to all.

Chapter XXVIII. *His Gifts to the Churches, and Bounties to Virgins and to the Poor.*

1 His liberality, however, was most especially exercised on behalf of the churches of God. In some cases he granted lands, in others he issued supplies of food for the support of the poor, of orphan children, and widows; besides which, he evinced much care and forethought in fully providing the naked and destitute with clothing. He distinguished, however, with most special honor those who had devoted their lives to the practice of Divine philosophy. Hence his respect, little short of veneration,

for God's most holy and ever virgin choir: for he felt assured that the God to whom such persons devoted themselves was himself an inmate of their souls.

Chapter XXIX. *Of Constantine's Discourses and Declamations.*[20]

1 For himself, he sometimes passed sleepless nights in furnishing his mind with Divine knowledge: and much of his time was spent in composing discourses, many of which he delivered in public; for he conceived it to be incumbent on him to govern his subjects by appealing to their reason, and to secure in all respects a rational obedience to his authority. Hence he would sometimes himself evoke an assembly, on which occasions vast multitudes attended, in the hope of hearing an emperor sustain the part of a philosopher. And if in the course of his speech any occasion offered of touching on sacred topics, he immediately stood erect, and with a grave aspect and subdued tone of voice seemed reverently to be initiating his auditors in the mysteries of the Divine doctrine: and when they greeted him with shouts of acclamation, he would direct them by his gestures to raise their eyes to heaven, and reserve their admiration for the Supreme King alone, and honor him with adoration and praise. He usually divided the subjects of his address, first thoroughly exposing the error of polytheism, and proving the superstition of the Gentiles to be mere fraud, and a cloak for impiety. He then would assert the sole sovereignty of God: passing thence to his Providence, both general and particular. Proceeding next to the dispensation of salvation, he would demonstrate its necessity, and adaptation to the nature of the case; entering next in order on the doctrine of the Divine judgment.[21] And here especially he appealed most powerfully to the consciences of his hearers, while he denounced the rapacious and violent, and those who

were slaves to an inordinate thirst of gain. Nay, he caused some of his own acquaintance who were present to feel the severe lash of his words, and to stand with downcast eyes in the consciousness of guilt, while he testified against them in the clearest and most impressive terms that they would have an account to render of their deeds to God. He reminded them that God himself had given him the empire of the world, portions of which he himself, acting on the same Divine principle, had intrusted to their government; but that all would in due time be alike summoned to give account of their actions to the Supreme Sovereign of all. Such was his constant testimony; such his admonition and instruction. And he himself both felt and uttered these sentiments in the genuine confidence of faith: but-his hearers were little disposed to learn, and deaf to sound advice; receiving his words indeed with loud applause, but induced by insatiable cupidity practically to disregard them.

Chapter XXX. *That He Marked Out Before a Covetous Man the Measure of a Grave, and So Put Him to Shame.*

1 On one occasion he thus personally addressed one of his courtiers: "How far, my friend, are we to carry our inordinate desires?" Then drawing the dimensions of a human figure with a lance which he happened to have in his hand, he continued: "Though thou couldst obtain the whole wealth of this world, yea, the whole world itself, thou wilt carry with thee at last no more than this little spot which I have marked out, if indeed even that be thine."[22] Such were the words and actions of this blessed prince; and though at the time he failed to reclaim any from their evil ways, yet notwithstanding the course of events afforded evident proof that his admonitions were more like Divine prophecies than mere words.

Chapter XXXI. *That He Was Derided Because*

of His Excessive Clemency.[23]

1 Meantime, since there was no fear of capital punishment to deter from the commission of crime, for the emperor himself was uniformly inclined to clemency, and none of the provincial governors visited offenses with their proper penalties, this state of things drew with it no small degree of blame on the general administration of the empire; whether justly or not, let every one form his own judgment: for myself, I only ask permission to record the fact.

Chapter XXXII. *Of Constantine's Oration Which He Wrote to the Assembly of the Saints.*[24]

1 The emperor was in the habit of composing his orations in the Latin tongue, from which they were translated into Greek by interpreters appointed for this special service. One of the discourses thus translated I intend to annex, by way of specimen, to this present work, that one, I mean, which he inscribed "To the assembly of the saints," and dedicated to the Church of God, that no one may have ground for deeming my testimony on this head mere empty praise.

Chapter XXXIII. *How He Listened Standing to Eusebius' Declamation in Honor of Our Saviour's Sepulchre.*

1 One act, however, I must by no means omit to record, which this admirable prince performed in my own presence. On one occasion, emboldened by the confident assurance I entertained of his piety, I had begged permission to pronounce a discourse on the subject of our Saviour's sepulchre in his hearing. With this request he most readily complied, and in the midst of a large number of auditors, in the interior of the palace itself, he stood and listened with the rest. I entreated him, but in vain, to seat himself on the imperial throne which stood

near: he continued with fixed attention to weigh the topics of my discourse, and gave his own testimony to the truth of the theological doctrines it contained. After some time had passed, the oration being of considerable length, I was myself desirous of concluding; but this he would not permit, and exhorted me to proceed to the very end. On my again entreating him to sit, he in his turn was displeased and said that it was not right to listen in a careless manner to the discussion of doctrines relating to God; and again, that this posture was good and profitable to himself, since it was reverent to stand while listening to sacred truths. Having, therefore, concluded my discourse, I returned home, and resumed my usual occupations.

Chapter XXXIV. *That He Wrote to Eusebius Respecting Easter, and Respecting Copies of the Holy Scriptures.*

1 Ever careful for the welfare of the churches of God, the emperor addressed me personally in a letter on the means of providing copies of the inspired oracles, and also on the subject of the most holy feast of Easter. For I had myself dedicated to him an exposition of the mystical import of that feast; and the manner in which he honored me with a reply may be understood by any one who reads the following letter.

Chapter XXXV. *Constantine's Letter to Eusebius, in Praise of His Discourse Concerning Easter.*

1 "Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Eusebius.
2 "It is indeed an arduous task, and beyond the power of language itself, worthily to treat of the mysteries of Christ, and to explain in a fitting manner the controversy respecting the feast of Easter, its origin as well as its precious and toilsome accomplishment.[25] For it is not in the power even of those who are able to apprehend them,

adequately to describe the things of God. I am, notwithstanding, filled with admiration of your learning and zeal, and have not only myself read your work with pleasure, but have given directions, according to your own desire, that it be communicated to many sincere followers of our holy religion. Seeing, then, with what pleasure we receive favors of this kind from your Sagacity, be pleased to gladden us more frequently with those compositions, to the practice of which, indeed, you confess yourself to have been trained from an early period, so that I am urging a willing man, as they say, in exhorting you to your customary pursuits. And certainly the high and confident judgment we entertain is a proof that the person who has translated your writings into the Latin tongue is in no respect incompetent to the task, impossible though it be that such version should fully equal the excellence of the works themselves. God preserve you, beloved brother." Such was his letter on this subject: and that which related to the providing of copies of the Scriptures for reading in the churches was to the following purport.

Chapter XXXVI. *Constantine's Letter to Eusebius on the Preparation of Copies of the Holy Scriptures.*

1 "Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Eusebius.
2 "It happens, through the favoring providence of God our Saviour, that great numbers have united themselves to the most holy church in the city which is called by my name. It seems, therefore, highly requisite, since that city is rapidly advancing in prosperity in all other respects, that the number of churches should also he increased. Do you, therefore, receive with all readiness my determination on this behalf. I have thought it expedient to instruct your Prudence to order fifty copies of the sacred Scriptures, the provision and use of which you

know to be most needful for the instruction of the Church, to be written on prepared parchment in a legible manner, and in a convenient, portable form, by professional transcribers thoroughly practiced in their art.[26] The catholicus[27] of the diocese has also received instructions by letter from our Clemency to be careful to furnish all things necessary for the preparation of such copies; and it will be for you to take special care that they be completed with as little delay as possible.[28] You have authority also, in virtue of this letter, to use two of the public carriages for their conveyance, by which arrangement the copies when fairly written will most easily be forwarded for my personal inspection; and one of the deacons of your church may be intrusted with this service, who, on his arrival here, shall experience my liberality. God preserve you, beloved brother!"

Chapter XXXVII. *How the Copies Were Provided.*

1 Such were the emperor's commands, which were followed by the immediate execution of the work itself, which we sent him in magnificent and elaborately bound volumes of a threefold and fourfold form.[29] This fact is attested by another letter, which the emperor wrote in acknowledgment, in which, having heard that the city Constantia in our country, the inhabitants of which had been more than commonly devoted to superstition, had been impelled by a sense of religion to abandon their past idolatry, he testified his joy, and approval of their conduct.

Chapter XXXVIII. *How the Market-Town of Gaza Was Made a City for Its Profession of Christianity, and Received the Name of Constantia.*

1 For in fact the place now called Constantia, in the province of Palestine, having embraced the saving

religion, was distinguished both by the favor of God, and by special honor from the emperor, being now for the first time raised to the rank of a city, and receiving the more honored name of his pious sister in exchange for its former appellation.

Chapter XXXIX. *That a Place in Phoenicia Also Was Made a City, and in Other Cities Idolatry Was Abolished, and Churches Built.*

1 A Similar change was effected in several other cities; for instance, in that town of Phoenicia which received its name from that of the emperor, and the inhabitants of which committed their innumerable idols to the flames, and adopted in their stead the principles of the saving faith. Numbers, too, in the other provinces, both in the cities and the country, became willing inquirers after the saving knowledge of God; destroyed as worthless things the images of every kind which they had heretofore held most sacred; voluntarily demolished the lofty temples and shrines which contained them; and, renouncing their former sentiments, or rather errors, commenced and completed entirely new churches. But since it is not so much my province to give a circumstantial detail of the actions of this pious prince, as it is theirs who have been privileged to enjoy his society at all times, I shall content myself with briefly recording such facts as have come to my own personal knowledge, before I proceed to notice the last days of his life.

Chapter XL. *That Having Conferred the Dignity of Caesars on His Three Sons at the Three Decennial Periods of His Reign, He Dedicated the Church at Jerusalem.*

1 By this time the thirtieth year of his reign was completed. In the course of this period, his three sons had been admitted at different times as his colleagues in the empire. The first, Constantinus, who bore his father's

name, obtained this distinction about the tenth year of his reign. Constantius, the second son, so called from his grandfather, was proclaimed Caesar about the twentieth, while Constans, the third, whose name expresses the firmness and stability of his character, was advanced to the same dignity at the thirtieth anniversary of his father's reign.[30] Having thus reared a threefold offspring, a Trinity,[31] as it were, of pious sons, and having received them severally at each decennial period to a participation in his imperial authority, he judged the festival of his Tricennalia to be a fit occasion for thanksgiving to the Sovereign Lord of all, at the same time believing that the dedication of the church which his zealous magnificence had erected at Jerusalem might advantageously be performed.

Chapter XLI. *That in the Meantime He Ordered a Council to Be Convened at Tyre, Because of Controversies Raised in Egypt.*

1 Meanwhile that spirit of envy which is the enemy of all good, like a dark cloud intercepting the sun's brightest rays, endeavored to mar the joy of this festivity, by again raising contentions to disturb the tranquillity of the Egyptian churches. Our divinely favored emperor, however, once more convened a synod composed of many bishops, and set them as it were in armed array, like the host of God, against this malignant spirit, having commanded their presence from the whole of Egypt and Libya, from Asia, and from Europe, in order, first, to decide the questions in dispute, and afterwards to perform the dedication of the sacred edifice above mentioned. He enjoined them, by the way, to adjust their differences at the capital city of Phoenicia, reminding them that they had no right, while harboring feelings of mutual animosity, to engage in the service of God, since his law expressly forbids those who are at variance to

offer their gift until they have first become reconciled and mutually disposed to peace. Such were the salutary precepts which the emperor continually kept vividly before his own mind, and in accordance with which he admonished them to undertake their present duties in a spirit of perfect unanimity and concord, in a letter to the following purport.

Chapter XLII. *Constantine's Letter to the Council at Tyre.*

1 "Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to the holy Council at Tyre.

2 "Surely it would best consist with and best become the prosperity of these our times, that the Catholic Church should be undivided, and the servants of Christ be at this present moment clear from all reproach. Since, however, there are those who, carried away by a baleful and furious spirit of contention (for I will not charge them with intentionally leading a life unworthy of their profession), are endeavoring to create that general confusion which, in my judgment, is the most pernicious of all evils; I exhort you, forward as you already are, to meet together and form a synod without delay: to defend those who need protection; to administer remedies to your brethren who are in peril; to recall the divided members to unity of judgment; to rectify errors while opportunity is yet allowed: that thus you may restore to so many provinces that due measure of concord which, strange and sad anomaly! the arrogance of a few individuals has destroyed. And I believed that all are alike persuaded that this course is at the same time pleasing to Almighty God (as well as the highest object of my own desires), and will bring no small honor to yourselves, should you be successful in restoring peace. Delay not, then, but hasten with redoubled zeal to terminate the present dissensions in a manner becoming

the occasion, by assembling together in that spirit of true sincerity and faith which the Saviour whom we serve especially demands from us, I may almost say with an audible voice, on all occasions. No proof of pious zeal on my part shall be wanting. Already have I done all to which my attention was directed by your letters. I have sent to those bishops whose presence you desired, that they may share your counsels. I have despatched Dionysius, a man of consular rank, who will both remind those prelates of their duty who are bound to attend the Council with you, and will himself be there to superintend the proceedings, but especially to maintain good order. Meantime should any one, though I deem it most improbable, venture on this occasion to violate my command, and refuse his attendance, a messenger shall be despatched forthwith to banish that person in virtue of an imperial edict, and to teach him that it does not become him to resist an emperor's decrees when issued in defense of truth. For the rest, it will be for your Holinesses, unbiased either by enmity or favor, but consistently with ecclesiastical and apostolic order, to devise a fitting remedy whether it be for positive offenses or for unpremeditated errors; in order that you may at once free the Church from all reproach, relieve my anxiety, and, by restoring the blessings of peace to those who are now divided, procure the highest honor for yourselves. God preserve you, beloved brethren!"[32]

Chapter XLIII. *Bishops from All the Provinces Attended the Dedication of the Church at Jerusalem.*

1 No sooner had these injunctions been carried into effect, than another emissary arrived with despatches from the emperor, and an urgent admonition to the Council to hasten their journey to Jerusalem without delay.[33] Accordingly they all took their departure from

the province of Phoenicia, and proceeded to their destination, availing themselves of the public means of transport. Thus Jerusalem became the gathering point for distinguished prelates from every province, and the whole city was thronged by a vast assemblage of the servants of God. The Macedonians had sent the bishop of their metropolis;[34] the Pannonians and Moesians the fairest of God's youthful flock among them. A holy prelate from Persia too was there, deeply versed in the sacred oracles; while Bithynian and Thracian bishops graced the Council with their presence; nor were the most illustrious from Cilicia wanting, nor the chief of the Cappadocians, distinguished above all for learning and eloquence. In short, the whole of Syria and Mesopotamia, Phoenicia and Arabia, Palestine, Egypt, and Libya, with the dwellers in the Thebaid, all contributed to swell the mighty concourse of God's ministers, followed as they were by vast numbers from every province. They were attended by an imperial escort,[35] and officers of trust had also been sent from the palace itself, with instructions to heighten the splendor of the festival at the emperor's expense.

Chapter XLIV. *Of Their Reception by the Notary Marianus; The Distribution of Money to the Poor; And Offerings to the Church.*

1 The director and chief of these officers was a most useful servant of the emperor, a man eminent for faith and piety, and thoroughly acquainted with the Divine word, who had been honorably conspicuous by his profession of godliness during the time of the tyrants' power, and therefore was deservedly entrusted with the arrangement of the present proceedings. Accordingly, in faithful obedience to the emperor's commands, he received the assembly with courteous hospitality, and entertained them with feasts and banquets on a scale of

great splendor. He also distributed lavish supplies of money and clothing among the naked and destitute, and the multitudes of both sexes who suffered from want of food and the common necessaries of life. Finally, he enriched and beautified the church itself throughout with offerings of imperial magnificence, and thus fully accomplished the service he had been commissioned to perform.

Chapter XLV. *Various Discourses by the Assembled Bishops; Ala by Eusebius, the Writer of This History.*

1 Meantime the festival derived additional luster both from the prayers and discourses of the ministers of God, some of whom extolled the pious emperor's willing devotion to the Saviour of mankind, and dilated on the magnificence of the edifice which he had raised to his memory. Others afforded, as it were, an intellectual feast to the ears of all present, by public disquisitions on the sacred doctrines of our religion. Others interpreted passages of holy Scripture, and unfolded their hidden meaning; while such as were unequal to these efforts presented a bloodless sacrifice and mystical service to God in the prayers which they offered for general peace, for the Church of God, for the emperor himself as the instrumental cause of so many blessings, and for his pious sons. I myself too, unworthy as I was of such a privilege, pronounced various public orations in honor of this solemnity, wherein I partly explained by a written description the details of the imperial edifice, and partly endeavored to gather from the prophetic visions apt illustrations of the symbols it displayed.[36] Thus joyfully was the festival of dedication celebrated in the thirtieth year of our emperor's reign.

Chapter XLVI. *That Eusebius Afterwards Delivered His Description of the Church of the*

Saviour, and a Tri-Cennial Oration Before Constantine Himself.

1 The structure of the church of our Saviour, the form of his sacred cave, the splendor of the work itself, and the numberless offerings in gold, and silver, and precious stones, I have described to the best of my ability, and dedicated to the emperor in a separate treatise, which on a fitting opportunity I shall append to this present work. I shall add to it also that oration on his Tricennalia which shortly afterwards, having traveled to the city which bears his name, I delivered in the emperor's own presence.[37] This was the second opportunity afforded me of glorifying the Supreme God in the imperial palace itself: and on this occasion my pious hearer evinced the greatest joy, as he afterwards testified, when he entertained the bishops then present, and loaded them with distinctions of every kind.

Chapter XLVII. *That the Council at Nicaea Was Held in the Twentieth, the Dedication of the Church at Jerusalem in the Thirtieth, Year of Constantine's Reign.*

1 This second synod the emperor convened at Jerusalem, being the greatest of which we have any knowledge, next to the first which he had summoned at the famous Bithynian city. That indeed was a triumphal assembly, held in the twentieth year of his reign, an occasion of thanksgiving for victory over his enemies in the very city which bears the name of victory.[38] The present meeting added luster to the thirtieth anniversary, during which the emperor dedicated the church at the sepulchre of our Saviour, as a peace-offering to God, the giver of all good.

Chapter XLVIII. *That Constantine Was Displeased with One Who Praised Him Excessively.*

1 And now that all these ceremonies were completed, and

the divine qualities of the emperor's character continued to be the theme of universal praise, one of God's ministers presumed so far as in his own presence to pronounce him blessed, as having been counted worthy to hold absolute and universal empire in this life, and as being destined to share the empire of the Son of God in the world to come. These words, however, Constantine heard with indignation, and forbade the speaker to hold such language, exhorting him rather to pray earnestly on his behalf, that whether in this life or in that which is to come, he might be found worthy to be a servant of God.[39]

Chapter XLIX. *Marriage of His Son Constantius Caesar.*

1 On the completion of the thirtieth year of his reign he solemnized the marriage of his second son,[40] having concluded that of his first-born long before. This was an occasion of great joy and festivity, the emperor himself attending on his son at the ceremony, and entertaining the guests of both sexes, the men and women in distinct and separate companies, with sumptuous hospitality. Rich presents likewise were liberally distributed among the cities and people.

Chapter L. *Embassy and Presents from the Indians.*

1 About this time ambassadors from the Indians, who inhabit the distant regions of the East, arrived with presents consisting of many varieties of brilliant precious stones, and animals differing in species from those known to us. These offerings they presented to the emperor, thus allowing that his sovereignty extended even to the Indian Ocean, and that the princes of their country, who rendered homage to him both by paintings and statues, acknowledged his imperial and paramount authority. Thus the Eastern Indians now submitted to his

sway, as the Britons of the Western Ocean had done at the commencement of his reign.

Chapter LI. *That Constantine Divided the Empire Between His Three Sons, Whom He Had Instructed in Politics and Religion.*

1 Having thus established his power in the opposite extremities of the world, he divided the whole extent of his dominions, as though he were allotting a patrimonial inheritance to the dearest objects of his regard, among his three sons. To the eldest he assigned his grandfather's portion; to the second, the empire of the East; to the third, the countries which lie between these two divisions.[41] And being desirous of furnishing his children with an inheritance truly valuable and salutary to their souls, he had been careful to imbue them with true religious principles, being himself their guide to the knowledge of sacred things, and also appointing men of approved piety to be their instructors. At the same time he assigned them the most accomplished teachers of secular learning, by some of whom they were taught the arts of war, while they were trained by others in political, and by others again in legal science. To each moreover was granted a truly royal retinue, consisting of infantry, spearmen, and body guards, with every other kind of military force; commanded respectively by captains, tribunes, and generals[42] of whose warlike skill and devotion to his sons the emperor had had previous experience.

Chapter LII. *That After They Had Reached Man's Estate He Was Their Guide in Piety.*

1 As long as the Caesars were of tender years, they were aided by suitable advisers in the management of public affairs; but on their arrival at the age of manhood their father's instructions alone sufficed. When present he proposed to them his own example, and admonished

them to follow his pious course: in their absence he furnished them by letter with rules of conduct suited to their imperial station, the first and greatest of which was an exhortation to value the knowledge and worship of the Sovereign Lord of all more than wealth, nay, more than empire itself. At length he permitted them to direct the public administration of the empire without control, making it his first request that they would care for the interests of the Church of God, and boldly profess themselves disciples of Christ. Thus trained, and excited to obedience not so much by precept as by their own voluntary desire for virtue, his sons more than fulfilled the admonitions of their father, devoting their earnest attention to the service of God, and observing the ordinances of the Church even in the palace itself, with all the members of their households.[43] For their father's forethought had provided that all the attendants of his son's should be Christians. And not only so, but the military officers of highest rank, and those who had the control of public business, were professors of the same faith: for the emperor placed confidence in the fidelity of men devoted to the service of God, as in a strong and sure defense. When our thrice blessed prince had completed these arrangements, and thus secured order and tranquillity throughout the empire, God, the dispenser of all blessings, judged it to be the fitting time to translate him to a better inheritance, and summoned him to pay the debt of nature.

Chapter LIII. *Having Reigned About Thirty-Two Years, and Lived Above Sixty, He Still Had a Sound Body.*

1 He completed the time of his reign in two and thirty years, wanting a few months and days,[44] and his whole life extended to about twice that period. At this age he still possessed a sound and vigorous body, free from all

blemish, and of more than youthful vivacity; a noble mien, and strength equal to any exertion; so that he was able to join in martial exercises, to fide, endure the fatigues of travel, engage in battle, and erect trophies over his conquered enemies, besides gaining those bloodless victories by which he was wont to triumph over those who opposed him.[45]

Chapter LIV. *Of Those Who Abused His Extreme Benevolence for Avarice and Hypocrisy.*

1 In like manner his mental[46] qualities reached the highest point of human perfection. Indeed he was distinguished by every excellence of character, but especially by benevolence; a virtue, however, which subjected him to censure from many, in consequence of the baseness of wicked men, who ascribed their own crimes to the emperor's forbearance. In truth I can myself bear testimony to the grievous evils which prevailed during these times; I mean the violence of rapacious and unprincipled men, who preyed on all classes of society alike, and the scandalous hypocrisy of those who crept into the Church, and assumed the name and character of Christians. His own benevolence and goodness of heart, the genuineness of his own faith, and his truthfulness of character, induced the emperor to credit the profession of these reputed Christians, who craftily preserved the semblance of sincere affection for his person. The confidence he reposed in such men sometimes forced him into conduct unworthy of himself, of which envy took advantage to cloud in this respect the luster of his character.[47]

Chapter LV. *Constantine Employed Himself in Composition of Various Kinds to the Close of His Life.*

1 These offenders, however, were soon over-taken by

divine chastisement. To return to our emperor. He had so thoroughly trained his mind in the art of reasoning that he continued to the last to compose discourses on various subjects, to deliver frequent orations in public, and to instruct his hearers in the sacred doctrines of religion. He was also habitually engaged in legislating both on political and military questions;[48] in short, in devising whatever might be conducive to the general welfare of the human race. It is well worthy of remark, that, very shortly before his departure, he pronounced a funeral oration before his usual auditory, in which he spoke at length on the immortality of the soul, the state of those who had persevered in a life of godliness, and the blessings which God has laid up in store for them that love him. On the other hand he made it appear by copious and conclusive arguments what the end of those will be who have pursued a contrary career, describing in vivid language the final ruin of the ungodly. His powerful testimony on these subjects seemed so far to touch the consciences of those around him, that one of the self-imagined philosophers, of whom he asked his opinion of what he had heard, bore testimony to the truth of his words, and accorded a real, though reluctant, tribute of praise to the arguments by which he had exposed the worship of a plurality of gods. By converse such as this with his friends before his death, the emperor seemed as it were to smooth and prepare the way for his transition to a happier life.

Chapter LVI. *How He Took Bishops with Him on an Expedition Against the Persians, and Look with Him a Tent in the Form of a Church.*

1 It is also worthy of record that about the time of which I am at present writing, the emperor, having heard of an insurrection of some barbarians in the East, observed that the conquest of this enemy was still in store for him, and

resolved on an expedition against the Persians. Accordingly he proceeded at once to put his forces in motion, at the same time communicating his intended march to the bishops who happened to be at his court, some of whom he judged it right to take with him as compan- ions, and as needful coadjutors in the service of God. They, on the other hand, cheerfully declared their willingness to follow in his train, disclaiming any desire to leave him, and engaging to battle with and for him by supplication to God on his behalf. Full of joy at this answer to his request, he unfolded to them his projected line of march;[49] after which he caused a tent of great splendor, representing in shape the figure of a church, to be prepared for his own use in the approaching war. In this he intended to unite with the bishops in offering prayers to the God from whom all victory proceeds.

Chapter LVII. *How He Received an Embassy from the Persians and Kept the Night Vigil with Others at the Feast of Easter.*

1 In the meanwhile the Persians, hearing of the emperor's warlike preparations, and not a little terrified at the prospect of an engagement with his forces, dispatched an embassy to pray for conditions of peace. These overtures the emperor, himself a sincere lover of peace, at once accepted, and readily entered on friendly relations with that people. At this time, the great festival of Easter was at hand; on which occasion he rendered the tribute of his prayers to God, and passed the night in watching with the rest.

Chapter LVIII. *Concerning the Building of a Church in Honor of the Apostles at Constantinople.*

1 After this he proceeded to erect a church in memory of the apostles, in the city which bears his name. This building he carried to a vast height, and brilliantly

decorated by encasing it from the foundation to the roof with marble slabs of various colors. He also formed the inner roof of finely fretted work, and overlaid it throughout with gold. The external covering, which protected the building from the rain, was of brass instead of tiles; and this too was splendidly and profusely adorned with gold, and reflected the sun's rays with a brilliancy which dazzled the distant beholder. The dome was entirely encompassed by a finely carved tracery, wrought in brass and gold.

Chapter LIX. *Farther Description of the Same Church.*

1 Such was the magnificence with which the emperor was pleased to beautify this church. The building was surrounded by an open area of great extent, the four sides of which were terminated by porticos which enclosed the area and the church itself. Adjoining these porticos were ranges of stately chambers, with baths and promenades, and besides many apartments adapted to the use of those who had charge of the place.

Chapter LX. *He Also Erected His Own Sepulchral Monument in This Church.*

1 All these edifices the emperor consecrated with the desire of perpetuating the memory of the apostles of our Saviour. He had, however, another object in erecting this building: an object at first unknown, but which afterwards became evident to all. He had in fact made choice of this spot in the prospect of his own death, anticipating with extraordinary fervor of faith that his body would share their title with the apostles themselves, and that he should thus even after death become the subject, with them, of the devotions which should be performed to their honor in this place. He accordingly caused twelve coffins to be set up in this church, like sacred pillars in honor and memory of the apostolic

number, in the center of which his own was placed, having six of theirs on either side of it. Thus, as I said, he had provided with prudent foresight an honorable resting-place for his body after death, and, having long before secretly formed this resolution, he now consecrated this church to the apostles, believing that this tribute to their memory would be of no small advantage to his own soul. Nor did God disappoint him of that which he so ardently expected and desired. For after he had completed the first services of the feast of Easter, and had passed this sacred day of our Lord in a manner which made it an occasion of joy and gladness to himself and to all; the God through whose aid he performed all these acts, and whose zealous servant he continued to be even to the end of life, was pleased at a happy time to translate him to a better life.

Chapter LXI. *His Sickness at Helenopolis, and Prayers Respecting His Baptism.*

1 At first he experienced some slight bodily indisposition, which was soon followed by positive disease. In consequence of this he visited the hot baths of his own city; and thence proceeded to that which bore the name of his mother. Here he passed some time in the church of the martyrs, and offered up supplications and prayers to God. Being at length convinced that his life was drawing to a close, he felt the time was come at which he should seek purification from sins of his past career, firmly believing that whatever errors he had committed as a mortal man, his soul would be purified from them through the efficacy of the mystical words and the salutary waters of baptism.[50] Impressed with these thoughts, he poured forth his supplications and confessions to God, kneeling on the pavement in the church itself, in which he also now for the first time received the imposition of hands with prayer.[51] After this

he proceeded as far as the suburbs of Nicomedia, and there, having summoned the bishops to meet him, addressed them in the following words.

Chapter LXII. *Constantine's Appeal to the Bishops, Requesting Them to Confer Upon Him the Rite of Baptism.*

1 "The time is arrived which I have long hoped for, with an earnest desire and prayer that I might obtain the salvation of God. The hour is come in which I too may have the blessing of that seal which confers immortality; the hour in which I may receive the seal of salvation. I had thought to do this in the waters of the river Jordan, wherein our Saviour, for our example, is recorded to have been baptized: but God, who knows what is expedient for us, is pleased that I should receive this blessing here. Be it so, then, without delay:[52] for should it be his will who is Lord of life and death, that my existence here should be prolonged, and should I be destined henceforth to associate with the people of God, and unite with them in prayer as a member of his. Church, I will prescribe to myself from this time such a course of life as befits his service." After he had thus spoken, the prelates performed the sacred ceremonies in the usual manner, and, having given him the necessary instructions, made him a partaker of the mystic ordinance. Thus was Constantine the first of all sovereigns who was regenerated and perfected in a church dedicated to the martyrs of Christ; thus gifted with the Divine seal of baptism, he rejoiced in spirit, was renewed, and filled with heavenly light: his soul was gladdened by reason of the fervency of his faith, and astonished at the manifestation of the power of God. At the conclusion of the ceremony he arrayed himself in shining imperial vestments, brilliant as the light,[53] and reclined on a couch of the purest white, refusing to clothe

himself with the purple any more.

Chapter LXIII. *How After His Baptism He Rendered Thanks to God.*

1 He then lifted his voice and poured forth a strain of thanksgiving to God; after which he added these words. "Now I know that I am truly blessed: now I feel assured that I am accounted worthy of immortality, and am made a partaker of Divine light." He further expressed his compassion for the unhappy condition of those who were strangers to such blessings as he enjoyed: and when the tribunes and generals of his army appeared in his presence with lamentations and tears at the prospect of their bereavement, and with prayers that his days might yet be prolonged, he assured them in reply that he was now in possession of true life; that none but himself could know the value of the blessings he had received; so that he was anxious rather to hasten than to defer his departure to God. He then proceeded to complete the needful arrangement of his affairs, bequeathing an annual donation to the Roman inhabitants of his imperial city; apportioning the inheritance of the empire, like a patrimonial estate, among his own children; in short, making every disposition according to his own pleasure.[54]

Chapter LXIV. *Constantine's Death at Noon on the Feast of Pentecost.*

1 All these events occurred during a most important festival, I mean the august and holy solemnity of Pentecost, which is distinguished by a period of seven weeks, and sealed with that one day on which the holy Scriptures attest, the ascension of our common Saviour into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit among men. In the course of this feast the emperor received the privileges I have described; and on the last day of all, which one might justly call the feast of feasts, he was

removed about mid-day to the presence of his God, leaving his mortal remains to his fellow mortals, and carrying into fellowship with God that part of his being which was capable of understanding and loving him.[55] Such was the close of Constantine's mortal life. Let us now attend to the circumstances which followed this event.

Chapter LXV. *Lamentations of the Soldiery and Their Officers.*

1 Immediately the assembled spearmen and body-guard rent their garments, and prostrated themselves on the ground, striking their heads, and uttering lamentations and cries of sorrow, calling on their imperial lord and master, or rather, like true children, on their father, while their tribunes and centurions addressed him as their preserver, protector, and benefactor. The rest of the soldiery also came in respectful order to mourn as a flock the removal of their good shepherd. The people meanwhile ran wildly throughout the city, some expressing the inward sorrow of their hearts by loud cries, others appearing confounded with grief: each mourning the event as a calamity which had befallen himself, and bewailing his death as though they felt themselves bereft of a blessing common alike to all.

Chapter LXVI. *Removal of the Body from Nicomedia to the Palace at Constantinople.*

1 After this the soldiers lifted the body from its couch, and laid it in a golden coffin, which they enveloped in a covering of purple, and removed to the city which was called by his own name. Here it was placed in an elevated position in the principal chamber of the imperial palace, and surrounded by candles burning in candlesticks of gold, presenting a marvelous spectacle, and such as no one under the light of the sun had ever seen on earth since the world itself began. For in the central apartment

of the imperial palace, the body of the emperor lay in its elevated resting-place, arrayed in the symbols of sovereignty, the diadem and purple robe, and encircled by a numerous retinue of attendants, who watched around it incessantly night and day.

Chapter LXVII. *He Received the Same Honors from the Counts and Other Officers as Before His Death.*

1 The military officers, too, of the highest rank, the counts, and the whole order of magistrates, who had been accustomed to do obeisance to their emperor before, continued to fulfill this duty without any change, even after his death entering the chamber at the appointed times, and saluting their coffined sovereign with bended knee, as though he were still alive. After them the senators appeared, and all who had been distinguished by any honorable office, and rendered the same homage. These were followed by multitudes of every rank, who came with their wives and children to witness the spectacle. These honors continued to be rendered for a considerable time, the soldiers having resolved thus to guard the body until his sons should arrive, and take on themselves the conduct of their father's funeral. No mortal had ever, like this blessed prince, continued to reign even after death, and to receive the same homage as during his life: he only, of all who have ever lived, obtained this reward from God: a suitable reward, since he alone of all sovereigns had in all his actions honored the Supreme God and his Christ, and God himself accordingly was pleased that even his mortal remains should still retain imperial authority among men; thus indicating to all who were not utterly devoid of understanding the immortal and endless empire which his soul was destined to enjoy. This was the course of events here.

Chapter LXVIII. *Resolution of the Army to Confer Thence-Forward the Title of Augustus on His Sons.*

1 Meanwhile the tribunes selected from the troops under their command those officers whose fidelity and zeal had long been known to the emperor, and dispatched them to the Caesars with intelligence of the late event. This service they accordingly performed. As soon, however, as the soldiery throughout the provinces received the tidings of the emperor's decease, they all, as if by a supernatural impulse, resolved with one consent, as though their great emperor had been yet alive, to acknowledge none other than his sons as sovereigns of the Roman world: and these they soon after determined should no longer retain the name of Caesar, but should each be honored with the title of Augustus, a name which indicates the highest supremacy of imperial power. Such were the measures adopted by the army; and these resolutions they communicated to each other by letter, so that the unanimous desire of the legions became known at the same point of time throughout the whole extent of the empire.

Chapter LXIX. *Mourning for Constantine at Rome; And the Honor Paid Him There Through Paintings After His Death.*

1 On the arrival of the news of the emperor's death in the imperial city, the Roman senate and people felt the announcement as the heaviest and most afflictive of all calamities, and gave themselves up to an excess of grief. The baths and markets were closed, the public spectacles, and all other recreations in which men of leisure are accustomed to indulge, were interrupted. Those who had erewhile lived in luxurious ease, now walked the streets in gloomy sadness, while all united in blessing the name of the deceased, as the one who was dear to God, and

truly worthy of the imperial dignity. Nor was their sorrow expressed only in words: they proceeded also to honor him, by the dedication of paintings to his memory, with the same respect as before his death. The design of these pictures embodied a representation of heaven itself, and depicted the emperor reposing in an ethereal mansion above the celestial vault. They too declared his sons alone to be emperors and Augusti, and begged with earnest entreaty that they might be permitted to receive the body of their emperor, and perform his obsequies in the imperial city.

Chapter LXX. *His Burial by His Son Constantius at Constantinople.*

1 Thus did they there testify their respect for the memory of him who had been honored by God. The second of his sons, however, who had by this time arrived, proceeded to celebrate his father's funeral in the city which bears his name, himself heading the procession, which was preceded by detachments of soldiers in military array, and followed by vast multitudes, the body itself being surrounded by companies of spearmen and heavy armed infantry. On the arrival of the procession at the church dedicated to the apostles of our Saviour, the coffin was there entombed. Such honor did the youthful emperor Constantius render to his deceased parent, both by his presence, and by the due performance of this sacred ceremony.

Chapter LXXI. *Sacred Service in the Church of the Apostles an the Occasion of Constantine's Funeral.*

1 As soon as [Constantius] had withdrawn himself with the military train, the ministers of God came forward, with the multitude and the whole congregation of the faithful, and performed the rites of Divine worship with prayer. At the same time the tribute of their praises was

given to the character of this blessed prince, whose body rested on a lofty and conspicuous monument, and the whole multitude united with the priests of God in offering prayers for his soul, not without tears,-nay, rather with much weeping; thus performing an office consonant with the desires of the pious deceased.[56] In this respect also the favor of God was manifested to his servant, in that he not only bequeathed the succession of the empire to his own beloved sons, but that the earthly tabernacle of his thrice blessed soul, according to his own earnest wish, was permitted to share the monument of the apostles; was associated with the honor of their name, and with that of the people of God; was honored by the performance of the sacred ordinances and mystic service; and enjoyed a participation in the prayers of the saints. Thus, too, he continued to possess imperial power even after death, controlling, as though with renovated life, a universal dominion, and retaining in his own name, as Victor, Maximus, Augustus, the sovereignty of the Roman world.[57]

Chapter LXXII. *Of the Phoenix.*

1 We cannot compare him with that bird of Egypt, the only one, as they say, of its kind, which dies, self-sacrificed, in the midst of aromatic perfumes, and, rising from its own ashes with new life, soars aloft in the same form which it had before. Rather did he resemble his Saviour, who, as the sown corn which is multiplied from a single grain, had yielded abundant increase through the blessing of God, and had overspread the whole world with his fruit. Even so did our thrice blessed prince become multiplied, as it were, through the succession of his sons. His statue was erected along with theirs in every province; and the name of Constantine was owned and honored even after the close of his mortal life.

Chapter LXXIII. *How Constantine is*

Represented on Coins in the Act of Ascending to Heaven.

1 A Coinage was also struck which bore the following device. On one side appeared the figure of our blessed prince, with the head closely veiled: the reverse exhibited him sitting as a charioteer, drawn by four horses, with a hand stretched downward from above to receive him up to heaven.

Chapter LXXIV. *The God Whom He Had Honored Deservedly Honored Him in Return.*

1 Such are the proofs by which the Supreme God has made it manifest to us, in the person of Constantine, who alone of all sovereigns had openly professed the Christian faith, how great a difference he perceives between those whose privilege it is to worship him and his Christ, and those who have chosen the contrary part, who provoked his enmity by daring to assail his Church, and whose calamitous end, in every instance, afforded tokens of his displeasure, as manifestly as the death of Constantine conveyed to all men an evident assurance of his Divine love.

Chapter LXXV. *He Surpassed All Preceding Emperors in Devotion to God.*

1 Standing, as he did, alone and pre-eminent among the Roman emperors as a worshiper of God; alone as the bold proclaimer to all men of the doctrine of Christ; having alone rendered honor, as none before him had ever done, to his Church; having alone abolished utterly the error of polytheism, and discountenanced idolatry in every form: so, alone among them both during life and after death, was he accounted worthy of such honors as none can say have been attained to by any other; so that no one, whether Greek or Barbarian, nay, of the ancient Romans themselves, has ever been presented to us as worthy of comparison with him.[58]

The Oration of the Emperor Constantine

Which He Addressed "To the Assembly of the Saints."

Chapter I. *Preliminary Remarks on the Feast of Easter: and How the Word of God, Having Conferred Manifold Benefits on Mankind, Was Betrayed by His Beneficiaries.*

That light which far outshines the day and sun, first pledge of resurrection, and renovation of bodies long since dissolved,[1] the divine token[2] of promise, the path which leads to everlasting life-in a word, the day of the Passion-is arrived, best beloved doctors, and ye, my friends who are assembled here, ye blessed multitudes, who worship him who is the author of all worship, and praise him continually with heart and voice, according to the precepts of his holy word. But thou, Nature,[3] parent of all things, what blessing like to this hast thou ever accomplished for mankind? Nay rather, what is in any sense thy workmanship, since he who formed the universe is himself the author of thy being? For it is he who has arrayed thee in thy beauty; and the beauty of Nature is life according to Nature's laws. But principles quite opposed to Nature have mightily prevailed; in that men have agreed in withholding his rightful worship from the Lord of all, believing that the order of the universe depended, not on his providence, but, on the blind uncertainty of chance: and this notwithstanding the clearest announcement of the truth by his inspired prophets, whose words should have claimed belief, but were in every way resisted by that impious wickedness which hates the light of truth, and loves the obscure mazes of darkness. Nor was this error unaccompanied by violence and cruelty, especially in that the will of princes encouraged the blind impetuosity of the multitude, or rather itself led the way in the career of reckless folly. Such principles as these, confirmed by the practice of

many generations, became the source of terrible evils in those early times: but no sooner had the radiance of the Saviour's presence appeared, than justice took the place of wrong, a calm succeeded the confusion of the storm, and the predictions of the prophets were all fulfilled. For after he had enlightened the world by the glorious discretion and purity of his character, and had ascended to the mansions of his father's house, he founded his Church on earth, as a holy temple of virtue, an immortal, imperishable temple, wherein the worship due to the Supreme Father and to himself should be piously performed. But what did the insane malice of the nations hereupon devise? Their effort was to reject the grace of Christ, and to ruin that Church which was ordained for the salvation of all, though they thus ensured the overthrow of their own superstition.[4] Once more then unholy sedition, once more war and strife prevailed, with stiff-neckedness, luxurious riot, and that craving for wealth which now soothes its victims with specious hope, now strikes them with groundless fear; a craving which is contrary to nature, and the very characteristic of Vice herself. Let her, however, lie prostrate in the dust, and own the victorious power of Virtue; and let her rend and tear herself, as well she may, in the bitterness of repentance. But let us now proceed to speak of topics which pertain to the Divine doctrine.

Chapter II. *An Appeal to the Church and to His Hearers to Pardon and Correct the Errors of His Speech.*

Hear then, thou master[5] of the ship, possessor of virgin purity, and thou Church, the cherisher of tender and inexperienced age, guardian of truth and gentleness, through whose perennial fountain the stream[6] of salvation flows! Be ye also indulgent, my hearers, who worship God sincerely, and are, therefore, the objects of

his care: attending, not to the language, but to the truth of what is said; not to him who speaks, but rather to the pious zeal which hallows his discourse! For what will be the use of words when the real purpose of the speaker remains unknown? It may be, indeed, that I essay great things; the love of God which animates my soul, a love which overpowers natural reserve, is my plea for the bold attempt. On you, then, I call, who are best instructed in the mysteries of God, to aid me with your counsel, to follow me with your thoughts, and correct whatever shall savor of error in my words, expecting no display of perfect knowledge, but graciously accepting the sincerity of my endeavor. And may the Spirit of the Father and the Son accord his mighty aid, while I utter the words which he shall suggest to speech or thought.[7] For if any one, whether in the practice of eloquence, or any other art, expects to produce a finished work without the help of God, both the author and his efforts will be found alike imperfect; while he has no cause to fear, no room for discouragement,[8] who has once been blessed with the inspiration of Heaven. Wherefore asking your indulgence for the length of this preface, let us attempt the theme in its utmost scope.[9]

Chapter III. *That God is the Father of the Word, and the Creator of All Things; And that Material Objects Could Not Continue to Exist, Were Their Causes Various.*

God, who is ever above all existence, and the good which all things desire, has no origin, and therefore no beginning, being himself the originator[10] of all things which receive existence. But he who proceeds from him is again united to him; and this separation from and union with him is not local, but intellectual in its character. For this generation was accompanied by no diminution of the Father's substance (as in the case of

generation by seed); but by the determining act of foreknowledge God manifested a Saviour presiding over[11] this sensible world, and all created things therein.[12] From hence, then, is the source of existence and life to all things which are within the compass of this world; hence proceed the soul, and every sense;[13] hence those organs through which the sense-perceptions are perfected. What, then, is the object of this argument? To prove that there is One director of all things that exist, and that all things, whether in heaven or on earth, both natural and organized bodies,[14] are subject to his single sovereignty. For if the dominion of these things, numberless as they are, were in the hands, not of one but of many, there must be a partition and distribution of the elements, and the old fables would be true;[15] jealousy, too, and ambition, striving for superior power, would destroy the harmonious concord of the whole, while each of the many masters would regulate in a manner different from the rest the portion subject to his control. The fact, however, that this universal order is ever one and the same, is the proof that it is under the care of a superior power, and that its origin cannot be ascribed to chance. Else how could the author of universal nature ever be known? To whom first, or last, could prayers and supplications be addressed? Whom could I choose[16] as the object of my worship, without being guilty of impiety towards the rest? Again, if haply I desired to obtain some temporal blessing, should I not, while expressing my gratitude to the Power who favored my request, convey a reproach to him who opposed it? Or to whom should I pray, when desiring to know the cause of my calamity, and to obtain deliverance? Or let us suppose that the answer is given by oracles and prophecies, but that the case is not within the scope of their authority, being the

province of some other deity.[17] Where, then, is mercy? where is the provident care of God for the human race? Unless, indeed, some more benevolent Power, assuming a hostile attitude against another who has no such feeling, be disposed to accord me his protection. Hence anger, discords, mutual censure, and finally universal confusion, would ensue, while each departed from his proper sphere of action, dissatisfied, through ambitious love of power, with his allotted portion. What, then, would be the result of these things? Surely this discord among the heavenly powers would prove destructive to the interests of earth: the orderly alternation of times and seasons would disappear; the successive productions of the earth would be enjoyed no more: the day itself, and the repose of night which follows it, would cease to be. But enough on this subject: let us once more resume that species of reasoning which admits of no reply.

Chapter IV. *On the Error of Idolatrous Worship.*

Whatever has had a beginning, has also an end. Now that which is a beginning in respect of time, is called a generation: and whatever is by generation is subject to corruption, and its beauty[18] is impaired by the lapse of time. How, then, can they whose origin is from corruptible generation, be immortal? Again, this supposition has gained credit with the ignorant multitude, that marriages, and the birth of children, are usual among the gods. Granting, then, such offspring to be immortal, and continually produced, the race must of necessity multiply to excess: and if this were so, where is the heaven, or the earth, which could contain so vast and still increasing a multitude of gods? But what shall we say of those men who represent these celestial beings as joined in incestuous union with their sister goddesses, and charge them with adultery and impurity?[19] We declare,

further, with all confidence, that the very honors and worship which these deities receive from men are accompanied by acts of wantonness and profligacy. Once more; the experienced and skillful sculptor, having formed the conception of his design, perfects his work according to the rules of art; and in a little while, as if forgetful of himself, idolizes his own creation, and adores it as an immortal god, while yet he admits that himself, the author and maker of the image, is a mortal man. Nay, they even show the graves and monuments of those whom they deem immortal, and bestow divine honors on the dead: not knowing that that which is truly blessed and incorruptible needs no distinction which perishable men can give: for that Being, who is seen by the mental eye, and conceived by the intellect alone, requires to be distinguished by no external form, and admits no figure to represent its character and likeness. But the honors of which we speak are given to those who have yielded to the power of death: they once were men, and tenants, while they lived, of a mortal body.

Chapter V. *That Christ, the Son of God, Created All Things, and Has Appointed to Every Thing the Term of Its Existence.*

But why do I defile my tongue with unhallowed words, when my object is to sound the praises of the true God? Rather let me cleanse myself, as it were, from this bitter draught by the pure stream which flows from the everlasting fountain of the virtue[20] of that God who is the object of my praise. Be it my special province to glorify Christ, as well by the actions of my life, as by that thanksgiving which is due to him for the manifold and signal blessings which he has bestowed. I affirm, therefore, that he[21] has laid the foundations of this universe; and conceived the race of men, ordaining these things by his word. And immediately he transferred our

newly created parents (ignorant at first, according to his will, of good and evil) to a happy region, abounding in flowers and fruits of every kind.[22] At length, however, he appointed them a seat on earth befitting creatures endued with reason; and then unfolded to their faculties, as intelligent beings, the knowledge of good and evil. Then, too, he bade the race increase; and each healthy region of the world, as far as the bounds of the circumambient ocean, became the dwelling-place of men; while with this increase of numbers the invention of the useful arts went hand in hand. Meantime the various species of inferior[23] animals increased in due proportion, each kind discovering some characteristic quality, the special gift of nature: the tame distinguished by gentleness and obedience to man; the wild by strength and swiftness, and an instinctive foresight which warned them to escape from peril. The gentler animals he placed entirely beneath man's protecting care, but entailed on him the necessity of strife with those of fiercer nature. He next created the feathered race, manifold in number, diverse in character and habits; brilliant with every variety of color, and endued with native powers of melody. Finally, having arranged with wise discrimination whatever else the compass of this world contains, and having assigned to every creature the stated term of its existence, he thus completed the beautiful order of the perfect whole.

Chapter VI. *The Falsity of the General Opinion Respecting Fate*[24] *Is Proved by the Consideration of Human Laws, and by the Works of Creation, the Course of Which is Not Fortuitous, But According to an Orderly Arrangement Which Evinces the Design of the Creator.*

The great majority, however, in their folly, ascribe the regulation of the universe to nature, while some imagine

fate, or accident,[25] to be the cause. With regard to those who attribute the control of all things to fate, they know not that in using this term they utter a mere word, but designate no active power, nor anything which has real and substantial existence. For what can this fate be, considered in itself, if nature be the first cause of all things? Or what shall we suppose nature itself to be, if the law of fate be inviolable? Indeed, the very assertion that there is a law of fate implies that such law is the work of a legislator: if, therefore, fate itself be a law, it must be a law devised by God. All things, therefore, are subject to God, and nothing is beyond the sphere of his power. If it be said that fate is the will[26] of God, and is so considered, we admit the fact. But in what respect do justice,[27] or self-control,[28] or the other virtues, depend on fate? From whence, if so, do their contraries, as injustice and intemperance, proceed? For vice has its origin from nature, not from fate; and virtue is the due regulation of natural character and disposition. But, granting that the varied results of actions, whether right or erroneous in themselves, depend on fortune or fate: in what sense can the general principle of justice,[29] the principle of rendering to every one his due, be ascribed to fate?[30] Or how can it be said that laws, encouragements to virtue and dissuasives from what is evil, praise, blame, punishment, in short whatever operates as a motive to virtue, and deters from the practice of vice, derive their origin from fortune or accident, and not rather from that of justice,[31] which is a characteristic attribute of the God of providence? For the events which befall men are consequent upon the tenor of their lives. Hence pestilence or sedition, famine and plenty, succeed in turn, declaring plainly and emphatically that all these things are regulated with reference to our course of life. For the

Divine Being delights in goodness, but turns with aversion from all impiety; looks with acceptance on the humble spirit, but abhors presumption, and that pride which exalts itself above what becomes a creature. And though the proofs of these truths are clear and manifest to our sight, they appear in a still stronger light, when we collect, and as it were concentrate our thoughts within ourselves, and ponder their causes with deep attention. I say, then, that it becomes us to lead a life of modesty and gentleness, not suffering our thoughts to rise proudly above our natural condition, and ever mindful that God is near us, and is the observer of all our actions. But let us still farther test the truth of the proposition, that the order of the universe depends on chance[32] or accident.[33] Are we then to suppose that the stars and other heavenly bodies, the earth and sea, fire and wind, water and air, the succession of the seasons, the recurrence of summer and winter, that all these have an undesigned and fortuitous existence, and not rather that they proceed from the creative hand of God? Some, indeed, are so senseless as to say that most of these things have been devised by mankind because of their need of them. Let it be admitted that this opinion has a semblance of reason in regard to earthly and corruptible things (though Nature herself supplies every good with a lavish hand); yet can we believe that things which are immortal and unchangeable are the inventions of men? These, indeed, and all things else which are beyond the reach of our senses, and comprehended by the intellect[34] alone, receive their being, not from the material life of man, but from the intellectual and eternal essence of God. Again, the orderly arrangement of these things is the work of his providence: for instance, that the day, deriving radiance from the sun, is bright; that night succeeds his setting, and the starry host[35] by which night itself is redeemed

from total darkness. And what shall we say of the moon, which when most distant from, and opposite to the sun, is filled with light, but wanes in proportion to the nearness of her approach to him? Do not these things manifestly evince the intelligence[36] and sagacious wisdom of God? Add to this that needful warmth of the solar rays which ripens the fruits of the earth; the currents of wind, so conducive to the fertility of the seasons; the cool and refreshing showers; and the harmony of all these things in accordance with which all are reasonably and systematically conducted: lastly, the everlasting order of the planets, which return to the self-same place at their appointed times: are not all these, as well as the perfect ministry of the stars, obedient to a divine law, evident proofs of the ordinance[37] of God? Again, do the mountain heights, the deep and hollow valleys, the level and extensive plains, useful as they are, as well as pleasing to the eye, appear to exist independently of the will of God? Or do not the proportion and alternate succession of land and water, serviceable, the one for husbandry, the other for the transport of such foreign products as we need, afford a clear demonstration of his exact and proportionate providential care? For instance, the mountains contain a store of water, which the level ground receives, and after imbibing sufficient for the renovation of the soil, sends forth the residue into the sea, and the sea in turn passes it onward to the ocean. And still we dare to say that all these things happen by chance[38] and accident; unable though we be to show by what shape or form this chance is characterized; a thing which has no foundation either in intellect or sense existence; which rings in our ears as the mere sound of an unsubstantial name!

Chapter VII. *In Regard to Things Above Our Comprehension, We Should Glorify the*

Creator's Wisdom, and Attribute Their Causes to Him Alone, and Not to Chance.

In fact, this word "chance" is the expression of men who think in haphazard and illogical fashion; who are unable to understand the causes of these things, and who, owing to the feebleness of their own apprehensions, conceive that those things for which they cannot assign a reason, are ordered without reason. There are, unquestionably, some things which possess wonderful natural properties, and the full apprehension of which is very difficult: for example, the nature of hot springs. For no one can easily explain the cause of so powerful a fire; and it is indeed surprising that though surrounded on all sides by a body of cold water, it loses none of its native heat. These phenomena appear to be of rare occurrence throughout the world, being intended, I am persuaded, to afford to mankind convincing evidence of the power of that Providence which ordains that two directly opposite natures, heat and cold, should thus proceed from the self-same source. Many indeed, yea, numberless, are the gifts which God has bestowed for the comfort and enjoyment of man; and of these the fruit of the olive-tree and the vine deserve especial notice; the one for its power of renovating and cheering the soul,[39] the other because it ministers to our enjoyment, and is likewise adapted for the cure of bodily disease. Marvelous, too, is the course of rivers, flowing night and day with unceasing motion, and presenting a type of ever-flowing, never-ceasing life: and equally wonderful is the alternate succession of day and night.

Chapter VIII. *That God Bestows an Abundant Supply of Whatever is Suited to the Wants of Man, and Ministers But Sparingly to His Pleasures; In Both Cases with a View to His Advantage.*

Let what has been said suffice to prove that nothing exists without reason and intelligence, and that reason itself and providence are of God. It is he who has also distributed the metals, as gold, silver, copper, and the rest, in due proportion; ordaining an abundant supply of those which would be most needed and generally employed, while he dispensed those which serve the purposes merely of pleasure in adornment of luxury with a liberal and yet a sparing hand, holding a mean between parsimony and profusion. For the searchers for metals, were those which are employed for ornament procured in equal abundance with the rest, would be impelled by avarice to despise and neglect to gather those which, like iron or copper, are serviceable for husbandry, or house-building, or the equipment of ships; and would care for those only which conduce to luxury and a superfluous excess of wealth. Hence it is, as they say, that the search for gold and silver is far more difficult and laborious than that for any other metals, the violence of the toil thus acting as a counterpoise to the violence of the desire. And how many instances might still further be enumerated of the workings of that Divine Providence which, in all the gifts which it has so unsparingly conferred upon us, plainly urges us to the practice of self-control and all other virtues, and leads us away from unbefitting covetousness! To trace the secret reasons of all these things is indeed a task which exceeds the power of human faculties. For how can the intellect of a frail and perishable being arrive at the knowledge of perfect truth, or apprehend in its purity the counsel of God from the beginning?

Chapter IX. *Of the Philosophers, Who Fell into Mistaken Notions, and Some of Them into Danger, by Their Desire of Universal Knowledge.-Also of the Doctrines of Plato.*

We ought, therefore, to aim at objects which are within our power, and exceed not the capacities of our nature. For the persuasive influence of argument has a tendency to draw most of us away from the truth of things, which has happened to many philosophers, who have employed themselves in reasoning, and the study of natural science, and who, as often as the magnitude of the subject surpasses their powers of investigation, adopt various devices for obscuring the truth. Hence their diversities of judgment, and contentious opposition to each others' doctrines, and this notwithstanding their pretensions to wisdom. Hence, too, popular commotions have arisen, and severe sentences, passed by those in power, apprehensive of the overthrow of hereditary institutions, have proved destructive to many of the disputants themselves. Socrates, for example, elated by his skill in argumentation, indulging his power of making the worse appear the better reason,[40] and playing continually with the subtleties of controversy, fell a victim to the slander of his own countrymen and fellow-citizens. Pythagoras, too, who laid special claim to the virtues of silence and self-control, was convicted of falsehood. For he declared to the Italians that the doctrines which he had received during his travels in Egypt, and which had long before been divulged by the priests of that nation, were a personal revelation to himself from God. Lastly, Plato himself, the gentlest and most refined of all, who first essayed to draw men's thoughts from sensible to intellectual and eternal objects, and taught them to aspire to sublimer speculations, in the first place declared, with truth, a God exalted above every essence, but to him he added also a second, distinguishing them numerically as two, though both possessing one perfection, and the being of the second Deity proceeding from[41] the first. For he is the creator and controller of the universe, and

evidently supreme: while the second, as the obedient agent of his commands, refers the origin of all creation to him as the cause. In accordance, therefore, with the soundest reason, we may say that there is one Being whose care and providence are over all things, even God the Word, who has ordered all things; but the Word being God himself is also the Son of God. For by what name can we designate him except by this title of the Son, without falling into the most grievous error? For the Father of all things is properly considered the Father of his own Word. Thus far, then, Plato's sentiments were sound; but in what follows he appears to have wandered from the truth, in that he introduces a plurality of gods, to each of whom he assigns specific forms. And this has given occasion to still greater error among the unthinking portion of mankind, who pay no regard to the providence of the Supreme God, but worship images of their own devising, made in the likeness of men or other living beings. Hence it appears that the transcendent nature and admirable learning of this philosopher, tinged as they were with such errors as these, were by no means free from impurity and alloy. And yet he seems to me to retract, and correct his own words, when he-plainly declares that a rational soul is the breath[42] of God, and divides all things into two classes, intellectual and sensible: [the one simple, the other][43] consisting of bodily structure; the one comprehended by the intellect alone, the other estimated by the judgment and the senses. The former class, therefore, which partakes of the divine spirit, and is uncompounded and immaterial, is eternal, and inherits everlasting life; but the latter, being entirely resolved into the elements of which it is composed, has no share in everlasting life. He farther teaches the admirable doctrine, that those who have passed a life of virtue, that is, the spirits of good and holy

men, are enshrined, after their separation from the body, in the fairest mansions of heaven. A doctrine not merely to be admired, but profitable too.[44] For who can believe in such a statement, and aspire to such a happy lot, without desiring to practice righteousness and temperance, and to turn aside from vice? Consistently with this doctrine he represents the spirits of the wicked as tossed like wreckage on the streams of Acheron and Pyriphlegethon.

Chapter X. *Of Those Who Reject the Doctrines of Philosophers, as Well as Those of Scripture: and that We Ought to Believe the Poets in All Things, or Disbelieve Them in All.*

There are, however, some persons so infatuated, that when they meet with such sentiments as these, they are neither converted or alarmed: nay, they even treat them with contempt and scorn, as if they listened to the inventions of fable; applauding, perhaps, the beauty of the eloquence, but abhorring the severity of the precepts. And yet they give credence to the fictions of the poets, and make both civilized and barbarous[45] countries ring with exploded and false tales. For the poets assert that the judgment of souls after death is committed to men whose parentage they ascribe to the gods,[46] ex-tolling their righteousness and impartiality and represent them as guardians of the dead. The same poets describe the battles of the gods and certain usages of war among them, and speak of them as subject to the power of fate. Some of these deities they picture to us as cruel, others as strangers to all care for the human race, and others again as hateful in their character. They introduce them also as mourning the slaughter of their own children, thus implying their inability to succor, not strangers merely, but those most dear to them. They describe them, too, as subject to human passions, and sing of their battles and

wounds, their joys and sorrows. And in all this they appear worthy of belief.[47] For if we suppose them to be moved by a divine impulse to attempt the poetic art, we are bound to believe them and to be persuaded of what they utter under this inspiration. They speak, then, of the calamities to which their divinities are subject; calamities which of course are altogether true! But it will be objected that it is the privilege of poets to lie, since the peculiar province of poetry is to charm[48] the spirits of the hearers, while the very essence of truth is that things told be in reality exactly what they are said to be.[49] Let us grant that it is a characteristic of poetry occasionally to conceal the truth. But they who speak falsehood do it not without an object; being influenced either by a desire of personal gain or advantage, or possibly, being conscious of some evil conduct, they are induced to disguise the truth by dread of the threatening vengeance of the laws. But surely it were possible for them (in my judgment), by adhering faithfully to truth at least while treating of the nature of the Supreme Being, to avoid the guilt at once of falsehood and impiety.

Chapter XI. *On the Coming of Our Lord in the Flesh; Its Nature and Cause.*[50]

Whoever, then, has pursued a course unworthy of a life of virtue, and is conscious of having lived an irregular and disorderly life, let him repent, and turn with enlightened spiritual vision to God; and let him abandon his past career of wickedness, content if he attain to wisdom even in his declining years. We, however, have received no aid from human instruction; nay, whatever graces of character are esteemed of good report by those who have understanding, are entirely the gift of God. And I am able to oppose no feeble buckler against the deadly weapons of Satan's armory; I mean the knowledge I possess of those things which are pleasing to him: and

of these I will select such as are appropriate to my present design, while I proceed to sing the praises of the Father of all. But do thou, O Christ, Saviour of mankind, be present to aid me in my hallowed task! Direct the words which celebrate thy virtues,[51] and instruct me worthily to sound thy praises. And now, let no one expect to listen to the graces of elegant language: for well I know that the nerveless eloquence of those who speak to charm the ear, and whose aim is rather applause than sound argument, is distasteful to hearers of sound judgment. It is asserted, then, by some profane and senseless persons, that Christ, whom we worship, was justly condemned to death, and that he who is the author of life to all, was himself deprived of life. That such an assertion should be made by those who have once dared to enter the paths of impiety, who have cast aside all fear, and all thought of concealing their own depravity, is not surprising. But it is beyond the bounds of folly itself that they should be able, as it seems, really to persuade themselves that the incorruptible God yielded to the violence of men, and not rather to that love alone which he bore to the human race: that they should fail to perceive that divine magnanimity and forbearance is changed by no insult, is moved from its intrinsic steadfastness by no revilings; but is ever the same, breaking down and repelling, by the spirit of wisdom and greatness of soul, the savage fierceness of those who assail it. The gracious kindness of God had determined to abolish iniquity, and to exalt order and justice. Accordingly, he gathered a company of the wisest among men,[52] and ordained that most noble and useful doctrine, which is calculated to lead the good and blessed of mankind to an imitation of his own providential care. And what higher blessing can we speak of than this, that God should prescribe the way of righteousness, and make

those who are counted worthy of his instruction like himself; that goodness might be communicated to all classes of mankind, and eternal felicity be the result? This is the glorious victory: this the true power: this the mighty work, worthy of its author, the restoration of all people to soundness of mind: and the glory of this triumph we joyfully ascribe to thee, thou Saviour of all! But thou, vile and wretched blasphemy, whose glory is in lies and rumors and calumny; thy power is to deceive and prevail with the inexperience of youth, and with men who still retain the folly of youth. These thou seducest from the service of the true God, and settest up false idols as the objects of their worship and their prayers; and thus the reward of their folly awaits thy deluded victims: for they calumniate Christ, the author of every blessing, who is God, and the Son of God. Is not the worship of the best and wisest of the nations of this world worthily directed to that God, who, while possessing boundless power, remains immovably true to his own purpose, and retains undiminished his characteristic kindness and love to man? Away, then, ye impious, for still ye may while vengeance on your transgressions is yet withheld; begone to your sacrifices, your feasts, your scenes of revelry and drunkenness, wherein, under the semblance of religion, your hearts are devoted to profligate enjoyment, and pretending to perform sacrifices, yourselves are the willing slaves of your own pleasures. No knowledge have ye of any good, nor even of the first commandment of the mighty God, who both declares his will to man, and gives commission to his Son to direct the course of human life, that they who have passed a career of virtue and self-control may obtain, according to the judgment of that Son, a second, yea, a blessed and happy existence.[53] I have now declared the decree of God respecting the life which he prescribes to man, neither ignorantly, as many

have done, nor resting on the ground of opinion or conjecture. But it may be that some will ask, Whence this title of Son? Whence this generation of which we speak, if God be indeed only One, and incapable of union with another? We are, however, to consider generation as of two kinds; one in the way of natural birth, which is known to all; the other, that which is the effect of an eternal cause, the mode of which is seen by the prescience of God, and by those among men whom he loves. For he who is wise will recognize the cause which regulates the harmony of creation. Since, then, nothing exists without a cause, of necessity the cause of existing substances preceded their existence. But since the world and all things that it contains exist, and are preserved,[54] their preserver must have had a prior existence; so that Christ is the cause of preservation, and the preservation of things is an effect:[55] even as the Father is the cause of the Son, and the Son the effect of that cause. Enough, then, has been said to prove his priority of existence. But how do we explain his descent to this earth, and to men? His motive in this,[56] as the prophets had foretold, originated in his watchful care for the interests of all: for it needs must be that the Creator should care for his own works. But when the time came for him to assume a terrestrial body, and to sojourn on this earth, the need requiring, he devised for himself a new mode[57] of birth. Conception was there, yet apart from marriage: childbirth, yet pure virginity: and a maiden became the mother of God! An eternal nature received a beginning of temporal existence: a sensible form of a spiritual essence, a material manifestation of incorporeal brightness,[58] appeared. Alike wondrous were the circumstances which attended this great event. A radiant dove, like that which flew from the ark of Noah,[59] alighted on the Virgin's

bosom: and accordant with this impalpable union, purer than chastity, more guileless than innocence itself, were the results which followed. From infancy possessing the wisdom of God, received with reverential awe by the Jordan, in whose waters he was baptized, gifted with that royal unction, the spirit of universal intelligence; with knowledge and power to perform miracles, and to heal diseases beyond the reach of human art; he yielded a swift and unhindered assent to the prayers of men, to whose welfare, indeed, his whole life was devoted without reserve. His doctrines instilled, not prudence only,[60] but real wisdom: his hearers were instructed, not in the mere social virtues,[61] but in the ways which conduct to the spiritual world; and devoted themselves to the contemplation of immutable and eternal things, and the knowledge of the Supreme Father. The benefits which he bestowed were no common blessings: for blindness, the gift of sight; for helpless weakness, the vigor of health; in the place of death, restoration to life again. I dwell not on that abundant provision in the wilderness, whereby a scanty measure of food became a complete and enduring supply[62] for the wants of a mighty multitude?[63] Thus do we render thanks to thee, our God and Saviour, according to our feeble power; unto thee, O Christ, supreme Providence of the mighty Father, who both savest us from evil, and impartest to us thy most blessed doctrine: for I say these things, not to praise, but to give thanks. For what mortal is he who shall worthily declare thy praise, of whom we learn that thou didst from nothing call creation into being, and illumine it with thy light; that thou didst regulate the confusion of the elements by the laws of harmony and order? But chiefly we mark thy loving-kindness,[64] in that thou hast caused those whose hearts inclined to thee to

desire earnestly a divine and blessed life, and hast provided that, like merchants of true blessings, they might impart to many others the wisdom and good fortune they had received; themselves, meanwhile, reaping the everlasting fruit of virtue. Freed from the trammels of vice, and imbued with the love of their fellow-men, they keep mercy ever before their eyes, and hoping for the promises of faith;[65] devoted to modesty, and all those virtues which the past career of human life had thrown aside [but which were now restored by him whose providence is over all].[66] No other power could be found to devise a remedy for such evils, and for that spirit of injustice which had heretofore asserted its dominion over the race of men. Providence, however, could reach the circumstances even here, and with ease restored whatever had been disordered by violence and the licentiousness of human passion. And this restoring power he exercised without concealment. For he knew that, though there were some whose thoughts were able to recognize and understand his power, others there were whose brutish and senseless nature led them to rely exclusively on the testimony of their own senses. In open day, therefore, that no one, whether good or evil, might find room for doubt, he manifested his blessed and wondrous healing power; restoring the dead to life again, and renewing with a word the powers of those who had been bereft of bodily sense.[67] Can we, in short, suppose, that to render the sea firm as the solid ground, to still the raging of the storm, and finally to ascend to heaven, after turning the unbelief of men to steadfast faith by the performance of these wondrous acts, demanded less than almighty power, was less than the work of God? Nor was the time of his passion unaccompanied by like wonders: when the sun was darkened, and the shades of night obscured the light of day. Then terror everywhere laid

hold upon the people, and the thought that the end of all things was already come, and that chaos, such as had been ere the order of creation began, would once more prevail. Then, too, the cause was sought of so terrible an evil, and in what respect the trespasses of men had provoked the wrath of Heaven; until God himself, who surveyed with calm dignity the arrogance of the ungodly, renewed the face of heaven, and adorned it with the host of stars. Thus the beclouded face of Nature was again restored to her pristine beauty.

Chapter XII. *Of Those Who are Ignorant of This Mystery; And that Their Ignorance is Voluntary. The Blessings Which Await Those Who Know It, Especially Such as Die in the Confession of the Faith.*[68]

But it will be said by some, who love to blaspheme, that it was in the power of God to ameliorate and soften the natural will of man. What better way, I ask, what better method could be devised, what more effectual effort put forth for reclaiming evil man, than converse with God himself? Was not he visibly present to teach them the principles of virtuous conduct? And if the personal instructions of God were without effect, how much more, had he continued absent and unheard? What, then, had power to hinder this most blessed doctrine? The perverse folly of man. For the clearness of our perceptions is at once obscured, as often as we receive with angry impatience those precepts which are given for our blessing and advantage. In truth, it was the very choice of men to disregard these precepts, and to turn a deaf ear to the commandments so distasteful to them; though had they listened, they would have gained a reward well worthy such attention, and that not for the present only, but the future life, which is indeed the only true life. For the reward of obedience to God is imperishable and

everlasting life, to which they may aspire who know him,[69] and frame their course of life so as to afford a pattern to others, and as it were a perpetual standard for the imitation of those who desire to excel in virtue. Therefore was the doctrine committed to men of understanding, that the truths which they communicated might be kept with care and a pure conscience by the members of their households, and that thus a truthful and steadfast observance of God's commands might be secured, the fruit of which is that boldness in the prospect of death which springs from pure faith and genuine holiness before God. He who is thus armed can withstand the tempest of the world, and is sustained even to martyrdom by the invincible power of God, whereby he boldly overcomes the greatest terrors, and is accounted worthy of a crown of glory by him to whom he has thus nobly testified.[70] Nor does he himself assume the praise, knowing full well that it is God who gives the power both to endure, and to fulfill with ready zeal the Divine commands. And well may such a course as this receive the meed of never-failing remembrance and everlasting honor. For as the martyr's life is one of sobriety and obedience to the will of God, so is his death an example of true greatness and generous fortitude of soul. Hence it is followed by hymns and psalms, words and songs of praise to the all-seeing God: and a sacrifice of thanksgiving is offered in memory of such men, a bloodless, a harmless sacrifice, wherein is no need of the fragrant frankincense, no need of fire; but only enough of pure light[71] to suffice the assembled worshipers. Many, too, there are whose charitable spirit leads them to prepare a temperate banquet for the comfort of the needy, and the relief of those who had been driven from their homes: a custom which can only be deemed burdensome[72] by those whose thoughts are not accordant

with the divine and sacred doctrine.

Chapter XIII. *That There is a Necessary Difference Between Created Things. That the Propensity to Good and Evil Depends on the Will of Man; And That, Consequently, Judgment is a Necessary and Reasonable Thing.*

There are, indeed, some who venture with childish presumption to find fault with God in respect of this also, and ask why it is that he has not created one and the same natural disposition for all, but rather has ordained the existence of many things different, nay, contrary in their nature, whence arises the dissimilarity of our moral conduct and character. Would it not (say they) have been better, both as regards obedience to the commands of God, and a just apprehension of himself, and for the confirmation of individual faith, that all mankind should be of the same moral character? It is indeed ridiculous to expect that this could be the case, and to forget that the constitution of the world is different from that of the things that are in the world; that physical and moral objects are not identical in their nature, nor the affections of the body the same as those of the soul. [For the immortal soul far exceeds the material world in dignity, and is more blessed than the perishable and terrestrial creation, in proportion as it is noble and more allied to God.[73]] Nor is the human race excluded from participation in the divine goodness; though this is not the lot of all indiscriminately, but of those only who search deeply into the Divine nature, and propose the knowledge of sacred things as the leading object of their lives.

Chapter XIV. *That Created Nature Differs Infinitely from Uncreated Being; To Which Man Makes the Nearest Approach by a Life of*

Virtue.

Surely it must be the very height of folly to compare created with eternal things, which latter have neither beginning nor end, while the former, having been originated and called into being, and having received a commencement of their existence at some definite time, must consequently, of necessity have an end. How then can things which have thus been made, bear comparison with him who has ordained their being? Were this the case,[74] the power to command their existence could not rightly be attributed to him. Nor can celestial things be compared to him, any more than the material[75] with the intellectual[76] world, or copies with the models from which they are formed. Nay, is it not absurd thus to confound all things, and to obscure the honor of God by comparing him with men, or even with beasts? And is it not characteristic of madmen, utterly estranged from a life of sobriety and virtue, to affect a power equivalent to that of God? If indeed we in any sense aspire to blessedness like that of God, our duty is to lead a life according to his commandments: so shall we, having finished a course consistent with the laws which he has prescribed, dwell for ever superior to the power of fate, in eternal and undecaying mansions. For the only power in man which can be elevated to a comparison with that of God, is sincere and guileless service and devotion of heart to himself, with the contemplation and study of whatever pleases him, the raising our affections above the things of earth, and directing our thoughts, as far as we may, to high and heavenly objects: for from such endeavors, it is said, a victory accrues to us more valuable than many blessings.[77] The cause, then, of that difference which subsists, as regards the inequality both of dignity and power in created beings, is such as I have described. In this the wise acquiesce with abundant

thankfulness and joy: while those who are dissatisfied, display their own folly, and their arrogance will reap its due reward.

Chapter XV. *Of the Saviour's Doctrines and Miracles; And the Benefits He Confers on Those Who Own Subjection to Him.*

The Son of God invites all men to the practice of virtue, and presents himself to all who have understanding hearts, as the teacher of his saving precepts.[78] Unless, indeed, we will deceive ourselves; and remain in wretched ignorance of the fact, that for our advantage, that is, to secure the blessing of the human race, he went about upon earth; and, having called around him the best men of their age, committed to them instructions full of profit, and of power to preserve them in the path of a virtuous life; teaching them the faith and righteousness which are the true remedy against the adverse power of that malignant spirit whose delight it is to ensnare and delude the inexperienced. Accordingly he visited the sick, relieved the infirm from the ills which afflicted them, and consoled those who felt the extremity of penury and want. He commended also sound and rational sobriety of character, enjoining his followers to endure, with dignity and patience, every kind of injury and contempt: teaching them to regard such as visitations permitted by their Father, and the victory is ever theirs who nobly bear the evils which befall them. For he assured them that the highest strength of all consisted in this steadfastness of soul, combined with that philosophy which is nothing else than the knowledge of truth and goodness, producing in men the generous habit of sharing with their poorer brethren those riches which they have themselves acquired by honorable means. At the same time he utterly forbade all proud oppression, declaring that, as he had come to associate with the

lowly, so those who despised the lowly would be excluded from his favor. Such and so great was the test whereby he proved the faith of those who owned allegiance to his authority, and thus he not only prepared them for the contempt of danger and terror, but taught them at the same time the most genuine confidence in himself. Once, too, his rebuke was uttered to restrain the zeal of one of his companions, who yielded too easily to the impulse of passion, when he assaulted with the sword, and, eager to protect his Saviour's life, exposed his own. Then it was that he bade him desist, and returned his sword to its sheath, reproving him for his distrust of refuge and safety in himself, and declaring solemnly that all who should essay to retaliate an injury by like aggression, or use the sword, should perish by a violent death.[79] This is indeed heavenly wisdom, to choose rather to endure than to inflict injury, and to be ready, should necessity so require, to suffer, but not to do, wrong. For since injurious conduct is in itself a most serious evil, it is not the injured party, but the injuring, on whom the heaviest punishment must fall. It is indeed possible for one who is subject to the will of God to avoid the evil both of committing and of suffering injury, provided his confidence be firm in the protection of that God whose aid is ever present to shield his servants from harm. For how should that man who trusts in God attempt to seek for resources in himself? In such a case he must abide the conflict with uncertainty of victory: and no man of understanding could prefer a doubtful to a certain issue. Again, how can that man doubt the presence and aid of God, who has had experience of manifold dangers, and has at all times been easily delivered, at his simple nod, from all terrors: who has passed, as it were, through the sea which was leveled by the Saviour's word, and afforded a solid road for the

passage of the people? This is, I believe, the sure basis of faith, the true foundation of confidence, that we find such miracles as these performed and perfected at the command of the God of Providence. Hence it is that even in the midst of trial we find no cause to repent of our faith, but retain an unshaken hope in God; and when this habit of confidence is established in the soul, God himself dwells in the inmost thoughts. But he is of invincible power: the soul, therefore, which has within it him who is thus invincible, will not be overcome by the perils which may surround it. Likewise,[80] we learn this truth from the victory of God himself, who, while intent on providing for the blessing of mankind, though grievously insulted by the malice of the ungodly, yet passed unharmed through the sufferings of his passion, and gained a mighty conquest, an everlasting crown of triumph, over all iniquity; thus accomplishing the purpose of his own providence and love as regards the just, and destroying the cruelty of the impious and unjust.

Chapter XVI. *The Coming of Christ Was Predicted by the Prophets; And Was Ordained to Be the Overthrow of Idols and Idolatrous Cities.*

Long since had his passion, as well as his advent in the flesh, been predicted by the prophets. The time, too, of his incarnation had been foretold, and the manner in which the fruits of iniquity and profligacy, so ruinous to the works and ways of righteousness, should be destroyed, and the whole world partake of the virtues of wisdom and sound discretion, through the almost universal prevalence of those principles of conduct which the Saviour should promulgate, over the minds of men; whereby the worship of God should be confirmed, and the rites of superstition utterly abolished. By these not the slaughter of animals alone, but the sacrifice of human

victims, and the pollutions of an accursed worship, had been devised: as, for example, by the laws of Assyria and Egypt, the lives of innocent men were offered up in images of brass or earth. Therefore have these nations received a recompense worthy so foul a worship. Memphis and Babylon [it was declared][81] shall be wasted, and left desolate with their fathers' gods. Now these things I speak not from the report of others, but having myself been present, and actually seen the most wretched of these cities, the unfortunate Memphis.[82] Moses desolated, at the Divine command, the land of the once mighty Pharaoh, whose arrogance was his destruction,[83] and destroyed his army (which had proved victorious over numerous and mighty nations, an army strong in defenses and in arms), not by the flight of arrows or the hurling of hostile weapons, but by holy prayer alone, and quiet supplication.

Chapter XVII. *Of the Wisdom of Moses, Which Was an Object of Imitation to the Wise Among Heathen Nations. Also Concerning Daniel, and the Three Children.*

No nation has ever been more highly blessed than that which Moses led: none would have continued to enjoy higher blessings, had they not willingly withdrawn themselves from the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But who can worthily describe the praises of Moses himself; who, after reducing to order an unruly nation, and disciplining their minds[84] to habits of obedience and respect, out of captivity restored them to a state of freedom, turned their mourning into gladness, and so far elevated their minds,[85] that, through the excess of contrast with their former circumstances, and the abundance of their prosperity, the spirit of the people was elated with haughtiness and pride? So far did he surpass

in wisdom those who had lived before him, that even the wise men and philosophers[86] who are extolled by heathen nations aspired to imitate his wisdom. For Pythagoras, following his wisdom, attained to such a pitch of self-control, that he became to Plato, himself a model of discretion, the standard of his own self-mastery. Again, how great and terrible the cruelty of that ancient Syrian king, over whom Daniel triumphed, the prophet who unfolded the secrets of futurity, whose actions evinced transcendent greatness of soul, and the luster of whose character and life shone conspicuous above all? The name of this tyrant was Nebuchadnezzar, whose race afterward became extinct, and his vast and mighty power was transferred to Persian hands. The wealth of this tyrant was then, and is even now, celebrated far and wide, as well as his ill-timed devotion to unlawful worship, his idol statues, lifting their heads to heaven, and formed of various metals, and the terrible and savage laws ordained to uphold this worship. These terrors Daniel, sustained by genuine piety towards the true God, utterly despised, and predicted that the tyrant's unseasonable zeal would be productive of fearful evil to himself. He failed, however, to convince the tyrant (for excessive wealth is an effectual barrier to true soundness of judgment), and at length the monarch displayed the savage cruelty of his character, by commanding that the righteous prophet should be exposed to the fury of wild beasts. Noble, too, indeed was the united spirit exhibited by those brethren[87] (whose example others have since followed, and have won surpassing glory by their faith in the Saviour's name),[88] those, I mean, who stood unharmed in the fiery furnace, and the terrors appointed to devour them, repelling by the holy touch of their bodies the flame by which they were surrounded. On the overthrow of the Assyrian Empire, which was destroyed

by thunderbolts from Heaven,[89] the providence of God conducted Daniel to the court of Cambyses the Persian king. Yet envy followed him even here; nor envy only, but the deadly plots of the magians against his life, with a succession of many and urgent dangers, from all which he was easily delivered by the providential care of Christ,[90] and shone conspicuous in the practice of every virtue. Three times in the day did he present his prayers to God, and memorable were the proofs of supernatural power which he displayed: and hence the magians, filled with envy at the very efficacy of his petitions, represented the possession of such power to the king as fraught with danger, and prevailed on him to adjudge this distinguished benefactor of the Persian people to be devoured by savage lions. Daniel, therefore, thus condemned, was consigned to the lions' den (not indeed to suffer death, but to win unfading glory); and though surrounded by these ferocious beasts of prey, he found them more gentle than the men who had enclosed him there. Supported by the power of calm and steadfast prayer, he was enabled to subdue all these animals, ferocious as, by nature, they were. Cambyses, on learning the event (for so mighty a proof of Divine power could not possibly be concealed), amazed at the marvelous story, and repenting the too easy credence he had given to the slanderous charges of the magians, resolved, notwithstanding, to be himself a witness of the spectacle. But when he saw the prophet with uplifted hands rendering praises to Christ, and the lions crouching, and as it were worshiping, at his feet, immediately he adjudged the magians, to whose persuasions he had listened, to perish by the self-same sentence, and shut them up in the lions' den.[91] The beasts, erewhile so gentle, rushed at once upon their victims, and with all the fierceness of their nature tore and destroyed them all.[92]

Chapter XVIII. *Of the Erythraean Sibyl, Who Pointed in a Prophetic Acrostic at Our Lord and His Passion. The Acrostic is Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour, Cross."*

My desire, however, is to derive even from foreign sources a testimony to the Divine nature of Christ. For on such testimony it is evident that even those who blaspheme his name must acknowledge that he is God, and the Son of God if indeed they will accredit the words of those whose sentiments coincided with their own.[93] The Erythraean Sibyl, then, who herself assures us that she lived in the sixth generation after the flood, was a priestess of Apollo, who wore the sacred fillet in imitation of the God she served, who guarded also the tripod encompassed with the serpent's folds, and returned prophetic answers to those who approached her shrine; having been devoted by the folly of her parents to this service, a service productive of nothing good or noble, but only of indecent fury, such as we find recorded in the case of Daphne.[94] On one occasion, however, having rushed into the sanctuary of her vain superstition, she became really filled with inspiration from above, and declared in prophetic verses the future purposes of God; plainly indicating the advent of Jesus by the initial letters of these verses, forming an acrostic in these words: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour, Cross. The verses themselves are as follows:

Judgment! Earth's oozing pores[95] shall mark the day;
Earth's heavenly king his glories shall display:
Sovereign of all, exalted on his throne,
Unnumbered multitudes their God shall own;
Shall see their Judge, with mingled joy and fear,
Crowned with his saints, in human form appear.
How vain, while desolate earth's glories lie,
Riches, and pomp, and man's idolatry!

In that dread hour, when Nature's fiery doom
Startles the slumb'ring tenants of the tomb,
Trembling all flesh shall stand; each secret wile,
Sins long forgotten, thoughts of guilt and guile,
Open beneath God's searching light shall lie:
No refuge then, but hopeless agony.
O'er heaven's expanse shall gathering shades of night
From earth, sun, stars, and moon, withdraw their light;
God's arm shall crush each mountain's towering pride;
On ocean's plain no more shall navies ride.
Dried at the source, no river's rushing sound
Shall soothe, no fountain slake the parched ground.
Around, afar, shall roll the trumpet's blast,
Voice of wrath long delayed, revealed at last.
In speechless awe, while earth's foundations groan,
On judgment's seat earth's kings their God shall own.
Uplifted then, in majesty divine,
Radiant with light, behold Salvation's Sign!
Cross of that Lord, who, once for sinners given,
Reviled by man, now owned by earth and heaven,
O'er every land extends his iron sway.
liSuch is the name these mystic lines display;
Saviour, eternal king, who bears our sins away.[96]

It is evident that the virgin uttered these verses under the influence of Divine inspiration. And I cannot but esteem her blessed, whom the Saviour thus selected to unfold his gracious purpose towards us.

Chapter XIX. *That This Prophecy Respecting Our Saviour Was Not the Fiction of Any Member of the Christian Church, But the Testimony of the Erythraean Sibyl, Whose Books Were Translated into Latin by Cicero Before the Coming of Christ. Also that Virgil Makes Mention of the Same, and of the Birth of the Virgin's Child: Though He Spoke*

Obscurely of This Mystery from Fear of the Ruling Powers.

Many, however, who admit that the Erythraean Sibyl was really a prophetess, yet refuse to credit this prediction, and imagine that some one professing our faith, and not unacquainted with the poetic art, was the composer of these verses. They hold, in short, that they are a forgery, and alleged to be the prophecies of the Sibyl on the ground of their containing useful moral sentiments, tending to restrain licentiousness, and to lead man to a life of sobriety and decorum. Truth, however, in this case is evident, since the diligence of our countrymen[97] has made a careful computation of the times; so that there is no room to suspect that this poem was composed after the advent and condemnation of Christ, or that the general report is false, that the verses were a prediction of the Sibyl in an early age. For it is allowed that Cicero was acquainted with this poem, which he translated into the Latin tongue, and incorporated with his own works.[98] This writer was put to death during the ascendancy of Antony, who in his turn was conquered by Augustus, whose reign lasted fifty-six years. Tiberius succeeded, in whose age it was that the Saviour's advent enlightened the world, the mystery of our most holy religion began to prevail, and as it were a new race of men commenced: of which, I suppose, the prince of Latin poets thus speaks:

Behold, a new, a heaven-born race appears.[99]

And again, in another passage of the Bucolics:

Sicilian Muses, sound a loftier strain.

What can be clearer than this? For he adds,

The voice of Cuma's oracle is heard again.[100]

Evidently referring to the Cumaean Sibyl. Nor was even this enough: the poet goes further, as if irresistibly impelled to bear his testimony. What then does he say?

Behold! the circling years new blessings bring:The

virgincomes, with her the long-desired king.[101]
Who, then, is the virgin who was to come? Is it not she who was filled with, and with child of the Holy Spirit? And why is it impossible that she who was with child of the Holy Spirit should be, and ever continue to be a virgin? This king, too, will return, and by his coming lighten the sorrows of the world. The poet adds,

Thou, chaste Lucina, greet the new-born child,
Beneath whose reign the iron offspring ends,
A golden progeny from heaven descends;
His kingdom banished virtue shall restore,
And crime shall threat the guilty world no more.

We perceive that these words are spoken plainly and at the same time darkly, by way of allegory. Those who search deeply for the import of the words, are able to discern the Divinity of Christ. But lest any of the powerful in the imperial city might be able to accuse the poet of writing anything contrary to the laws of the country, and subverting the religious sentiments which had prevailed from ancient times, he intentionally obscures the truth. For he was acquainted, as I believe, with that blessed mystery which gave to our Lord the name of Saviour:[102] but, that he might avoid the severity of cruel men, he drew the thoughts of his hearers to objects with which they were familiar, saying that altars must be erected, temples raised, and sacrifices offered to the new-born child. His concluding words also are adapted to the sentiments of those who were accustomed to such a creed; for he says:

Chapter XX. *A Farther Quotation from Virgilius Maro Respecting Christ, with Its Interpretation, Showing that the Mystery Was Indicated Therein Darkly, as Might Be Expected from a Poet.*

A life immortal he shall lead, and be

By heroes seen, himself shall heroes see;

evidently meaning the righteous.

The jarring nations he in peace shall bind,
And with paternal virtues rule mankind.
Unbidden earth her earliest fruits shall bring,
And fragrant herbs, to greet her infant king.

Well indeed was this admirably wise and accomplished man acquainted with the cruel character of the times. He proceeds:

The goats, uncall'd, full udders home shall bear;
The lowing herds no more fierce lions fear.

Truly said: for faith will not stand in awe of the mighty in the imperial palace.

His cradle shall with rising flowers be crown'd:
The serpent's brood shall die; the sacred ground
Shall weeds and poisonous plants refuse to bear;
Each common bush th' Assyrian rose[103] shall wear.

Nothing could be said more true or more consistent with the Saviour's excellency than this. For the power of the Divine Spirit presents the very cradle of God, like fragrant flowers, to the new-born race.[104] The serpent, too, and the venom of that serpent, perishes, who originally beguiled our first parents, and drew their thoughts from their native innocence[105] to the enjoyment of pleasures, that they might experience[106] that threatened death. For before the Saviour's advent, the serpent's power was shown in subverting the souls of those who were sustained by no well-grounded hope, and ignorant of that immortality which awaits the righteous. But after that he had suffered, and was separated for a season from the body which he had assumed, the power of the resurrection was revealed to man through the communication of the Holy Spirit: and whatever stain of

human guilt might yet remain was removed by the washing of sacred lustrations.

Then indeed could the Saviour bid his followers be of good cheer, and, remembering his adorable and glorious resurrection, expect the like for themselves. Truly, then, the poisonous race may be said to be extinct. Death himself is extinct, and the truth of the resurrection sealed. Again, the Assyrian race is gone, which first led the way to faith in God.[107] But when he speaks of the growth of amomum every where, he alludes to the multitude of the true worshipers of God.[108] For it is as though a multitude of branches, crowned with fragrant flowers, and fitly watered, sprung from the self-same root. Most justly said, Maro, thou wisest of poets! and with this all that follows is consistent.

But when heroic worth his youth shall hear,
And learn his father's virtues to revere.

By the praises of heroes, he indicates the works of righteous men: by the virtues of his Father he speaks of the creation and everlasting structure of the world: and, it may be, of those laws by which God's beloved Church is guided, and ordered in a course of righteousness and virtue. Admirable, again, is the advance to higher things of that state of life which is intermediate, as it were, between good and evil, and which seldom admits a sudden change:

Unlabored harvests shall the fields adorn,[109]

that is, the fruit of the Divine law springs up for the service of men.

And clustered gropes shall blush on every thorn.

Far otherwise has it been during the corrupt and lawless period of human life.

The knotted oaks shall showers of honey weep.[110]

He here describes the folly and obduracy of the men of that age; and perhaps he also intimates that they who

suffer hardships in the cause of God, shall reap sweet fruits of their own endurance.

Yet, of old fraud some footsteps shall remain;
The merchant still shall plough the deep for gain:
Great cities shall with walls be compassed round,
And sharpened shares shall vex the fruitful ground:
Another Tiphys shall new seas explore;
Another Argo land the chiefs upon the Iberian shore;
Another Helen other wars create,
And great Achilles urge the Trojan fate.

Well said, wisest of bards! Thou hast carried the license of a poet precisely to the proper point. For it was not thy purpose to assume the functions of a prophet, to which thou hadst no claim. I suppose also he was restrained by a sense of the danger which threatened one who should assail the credit of ancient religious practice. Cautiously, therefore, and securely, as far as possible, he presents the truth to those who have faculties to understand it; and while he denounces the munitions and conflicts of war[111] (which indeed are still to be found in the course of human life), he describes our Saviour as proceeding to the war against Troy, understanding by Troy the world itself.[112] And surely he did maintain the struggle against the opposing powers of evil, sent on that mission both by the designs of his own providence and the commandment of his Almighty Father. How, then, does the poet proceed?

But when to ripen'd manhood he shall grow,

that is, when, having arrived at the age of manhood, he shall utterly remove the evils which encompass the path of human life, and tranquilize the world by the blessings

of peace:
The greedy sailor shall the seas forego;
No keel shall cut the waves for foreign ware,
For every soil shall every product bear.
The laboring hind his oxen shall disjoin;
No plough shall hurt the glebe, no pruning-hook the vine;
Nor wool shall in dissembled colors shine:
But the luxurious father of the fold,
With native purple, and unborrow'd gold,
Beneath his pompous fleece shall proudly sweat;
And under Tyrian robes the lamb shall bleat.
Mature in years, to ready honors move,
O of celestial seed, O foster son of Jove!
See, laboring nature calls thee to sustain
The nodding flame of heaven, and earth, and main!
See to their base restored, earth, seas, and air;
And joyful ages, from behind, in crowing ranks appear.
To sing thy praise, would heaven my breath prolong.
Infusing spirits worthy such a song,
Not Thracian Orpheus should transcend my lays,
Nor Linus, crown'd with never-fading bays;
Though each his heavenly parent should inspire;
The Muse instruct the voice, and Phoebus tune the lyre.
Should Pan contend in verse, and thou my theme,
Arcadian judges should their God condemn.[113]

Behold (says he) how the mighty world and the elements together manifest their joy.

Chapter XXI. *That These Things Cannot Have Been Spoken of a Mere Man: and that Unbelievers, Owing to Their Ignorance of Religion, Know Not Even the Origin of Their Own Existence.*

It may be some will foolishly suppose that these words were spoken of the birth of a mere ordinary mortal. But if

this were all, what reason could there be that the earth should need neither seed nor plough, that the vine should require no pruning-hook, or other means of culture? How can we suppose these things to be spoken of a mere mortal's birth? For nature is the minister of the Divine will, not an instrument obedient to the command of man. Indeed, the very joy of the elements indicates the advent of God, not the conception of a human being. The prayer, too, of the poet that his life might be prolonged is a proof of the Divinity of him whom he invoked; for we desire life and preservation from God, and not from man. Indeed, the Erythraean Sibyl thus appeals to God: "Why, O Lord, dost thou compel me still to foretell the future, and not rather remove me from this earth to await the blessed day of thy coming?" And Maro adds to what he had said before:

Begin, sweet boy! with smiles thy mother know,
Who ten long months did with thy burden go.
No mortal parents smiled upon thy birth:
No nuptial joy thou know'st, no feast of earth.

How could his parents have smiled on him? For his Father[114] is God, who is a Power without sensible quality,[115] existing, not in any definite shape, but as comprehending other beings,[116] and not, therefore, in a human body. And who knows not that the Holy Spirit has no participation in the nuptial union? For what desire can exist in the disposition of that good which all things else desire? What fellowship, in short, can wisdom hold with pleasure? But let these arguments be left to those who ascribe to him a human origin, and who care not to purify themselves from all evil in word as well as deed. On thee, Piety, I call to aid my words, on thee who art the very law of purity, most desirable of all blessings, teacher of holiest hope, assured promise of immortality! Thee,

Piety, and thee, Clemency, I adore. We who have obtained thine aid[117] owe thee everlasting gratitude for thy healing power. But the multitudes whom their innate hatred of thyself deprives of thy succor, are equally estranged from God himself, and know not that the very cause of their life and being, and that of all the ungodly, is connected with the rightful worship of him who is Lord of all: for the world itself is his, and all that it contains.

Chapter XXII. *The Emperor Thankfully Ascribes His Victories and All Other Blessings to Christ; And Condemns the Conduct of the Tyrant Maximin, the Violence of Whose Persecution Had Enhanced the Glory of Religion.*

To thee, Piety, I ascribe the cause of my own prosperity, and of all that I now possess. To this truth the happy issue of all my endeavors bears testimony: brave deeds, victories in war, and triumphs over conquered foes. This truth the great city itself allows with joy and praise. The people, too, of that much-loved city accord in the same sentiment, though once, deceived by ill-grounded hopes, they chose a ruler unworthy of themselves,[118] a ruler who speedily received the chastisement which his audacious deeds deserved. But be it far from me now to recall the memory of these events, while holding converse with thee, Piety, and essaying with earnest endeavor to address thee with holy and gentle words. Yet will I say one thing, which haply shall not be unbefitting or unseemly. A furious, a cruel, and implacable war was maintained by the tyrants against thee, Piety, and thy holy churches: nor were there wanting some in Rome itself who exulted at a calamity so grievous to the public weal. Nay, the battlefield was prepared; when thou disdst stand forth,[119] and present thyself a voluntary victim,

supported by faith in God. Then indeed it was that the cruelty of ungodly men, which raged incessantly like a devouring fire, wrought for thee a wondrous and ever memorable glory. Astonishment seized the spectators themselves, when they beheld the very executioners who tortured the bodies of their holy victims wearied out, and disgusted at the cruelties;[120] the bonds loosened, the engines of torture powerless, the flames extinguished, while the sufferers preserved their constancy unshaken even for a moment. What, then, hast thou gained by these atrocious deeds, most impious of men?[121] And what was the cause of thy insane fury? Thou wilt say, doubtless, these acts of thine were done in honor of the gods. What gods are these? or what worthy conception hast thou of the Divine nature? Thinkest thou the gods are subject to angry passions as thou art? Were it so indeed, it had been better for thee to wonder at their strange determination than obey their harsh command, when they urged thee to the unrighteous slaughter of innocent men. Thou wilt allege, perhaps, the customs of thy ancestors and the opinion of mankind in general, as the cause of this conduct. I grant the fact: for those customs are very like the acts themselves, and proceed from the self-same source of folly. Thou thoughtest, it may be, that some special power resided in images formed and fashioned by human art; and hence thy reverence, and diligent care lest they should be defiled: those mighty and highly exalted gods, thus dependent on the care of men!

Chapter XXIII. *Of Christian Conduct. That God is Pleased with Those Who Lead a Life of Virtue: and that We Must Expect a Judgment and Future Retribution.*

Compare our religion with your own. Is there not with us genuine concord, and unwearied love of others? If we reprove a fault, is not our object to admonish, not to

destroy; our correction for safety, not for cruelty: Do we not exercise, not only sincere faith towards God, but fidelity in the relations of social life? Do we not pity the unfortunate? Is not ours a life of simplicity which disdains to cover evil beneath the mask of fraud and hypocrisy? Do we not acknowledge the true God, and his undivided sovereignty? This is real godliness: this is religion sincere and truly undefiled: this is the life of wisdom; and they who have it are travelers, as it were, on a noble road which leads to eternal life. For he who has entered on such a course, and keeps his soul pure from the pollutions of the body, does not wholly die: rather may he be said to complete the service appointed him by God, than to die. Again, he who confesses allegiance to God is not easily overborne by insolence or rage, but nobly stands under the pressure of necessity and the trial of his constancy is as it were, a passport to the favor of God. For we cannot doubt that the Deity is pleased with excellence in human conduct. For it would be absurd indeed if the powerful and the humble alike acknowledge gratitude to those from whose services they receive benefit, and repay them by services in return, and yet that he who is supreme and sovereign of all, nay, who is Good itself, should be negligent in this respect. Rather does he follow us throughout the course of our lives, is near us in every act of goodness, accepts, and at once rewards our virtue and obedience; though he defers the full recompense to that future period, when the actions of our lives shall pass under his review and when those who are clear in that account shall receive the reward of everlasting life, while the wicked shall be visited with the penalties due to their crimes.

Chapter XXIV. *Of Decius, Valerian, and Aurelian Who Experienced a Miserable End in Consequence of Their Persecution of the*

Church.

To thee, Decius,[122] I now appeal, who has trampled with insult on the labors of the righteous: to thee, the hater of the Church, the punisher of those who lived a holy life: what is now thy condition after death? How hard and wretched thy present circumstances! Nay, the interval before thy death gave proof enough of thy miserable fate, when overthrown with all thine army on the plains of Scythia, thou didst expose the vaunted power of Rome to the contempt of the Goths. Thou, too, Valerian, who didst manifest the same spirit of cruelty towards the servants of God, hast afforded an example of righteous judgment. A captive in the enemies' hands, led in chains while yet arrayed in the purple and imperial attire, and at last thy skin stripped from thee, and preserved by command of Sapor the Persian king, thou hast left a perpetual trophy of thy calamity. And thou, Aurelian, fierce perpetrator of every wrong, how signal was thy fall, when, in the midst of thy wild career in Thrace, thou wast slain on the public highway, and didst fill the furrows of the road with thine impious blood!

Chapter XXV. *Of Diocletian, Who Ignobly Abdicated[123] The Imperial Throne, and Was Terrified by the Dread of Lightning for His Persecution of the Church.*

Diocletian, however, after the display of relentless cruelty as a persecutor, evinced a consciousness of his own guilt and owing to the affliction of a disordered mind, endured the confinement of a mean and separate dwelling.[124] What then, did he gain by his active hostility against our God? Simply this I believe, that he passed the residue of his life in continual dread of the lightning's stroke. Nicomedia attests the fact; eyewitnesses, of whom I myself am one, declare it. The palace, and the emperor's private chamber were destroyed, consumed by lightning,

devoured by the fire of heaven. Men of understanding hearts had indeed predicted the issue of such conduct; for they could not keep silence, nor conceal their grief at such unworthy deeds; but boldly and openly expressed their feeling, saying one to another: "What madness is this? and what an insolent abuse of power, that man should dare to fight against God; should deliberately insult the most holy and just of alI religions; and plan, without the slightest provocation, the destruction of so great a multitude of righteous persons? O rare example of moderation to his subjects! Worthy instructor of his army in the care and protection due to their fellow-citizens! Men who had never seen the backs of a retreating army plunged their swords into the breasts of their own countrymen!" So great was the effusion of blood shed, that if shed in battle with barbarian enemies, it had been sufficient to purchase a perpetual peace.[125] At length, indeed, the providence of God took vengeance on these unhallowed deeds; but not without severe damage to the state. For the entire army of the emperor of whom I have just spoken, becoming subject to the authority of a worthless person,[126] who had violently usurped the supreme authority at Rome (when the providence of God restored freedom to that great city), was destroyed in several successive battles. And when we remember the cries with which those who were oppressed, and who ardently longed for their native liberty implored the help of God; and their praise and thanksgiving to him on the removal of the evils under which they had groaned, when that liberty was regained, and free and equitable intercourse restored: do not these things every way afford convincing proofs of the providence of God, and his affectionate regard for the interests of mankind?

Chapter XXVI. *The Emperor Ascribes His Personal Piety to God; And Shows that We are*

Bound to Seek Success from God, and Attribute It to Him; But to Consider Mistakes as the Result of Our Own Negligence.

When men commend my services, which owe their origin to the inspiration of Heaven, do they not clearly establish the truth that God is the cause of the exploits I have performed? Assuredly they do: for it belongs to God to do whatever is best, and to man, to perform the commands of God. I believe, indeed, the best and noblest course of action is, when, before an attempt is made, we provide as far as possible for a secure result: and surely all men know that the holy service in which these hands have been employed has originated in pure and genuine faith towards God; that whatever has been done for the common welfare has been effected by active exertion combined with supplication and prayer; the consequence of which has been as great an amount of individual and public benefit as each could venture to hope for himself and those he holds most dear. They have witnessed battles, and have been spectators of a war in which the providence of God has granted victory to this people:[127] they have seen how he has favored and seconded our prayers. For righteous prayer is a thing invincible; and no one fails to attain his object who addresses holy supplication to God: nor is a refusal possible, except in the case of wavering faith;[128] for God is ever favorable, ever ready to approve of human virtue. While, therefore, it is natural for man occasionally to err, yet God is not the cause of human error. Hence it becomes all pious persons to render thanks to the Saviour of all, first for our own individual security, and then for the happy posture of public affairs: at the same time intreating the favor of Christ with holy prayers and constant supplications, that he would continue to us our present blessings. For he is the invincible ally and protector of the righteous: he is

the supreme judge of all things, the prince of immorality, the Giver of everlasting life.

The Oration in Praise of the Emperor Constantine.

Pronounced on the Thirtieth Anniversary of His Reign.

Prologue to the Oration.[1]

1 I Come not forward prepared with a fictitious narrative, nor with elegance of language to captivate the ear, desiring to charm my hearers as it were, with a siren's voice; nor shall I present the draught of pleasure in cups of gold decorated with lorry flowers (I mean the graces of style) to those who are pleased with such things. Rather would I follow the precepts of the wise, and admonish all to avoid and turn aside from the beaten road, and keep themselves from contact with the vulgar crowd.

2 I come, then, prepared to celebrate our emperor's praises in a newer strain; and, though the number be infinite of those who desire to be my companions in my present task, I am resolved to shun the common track of men,[2] and to pursue that untrodden path which it is unlawful to enter on with unwashed feet. Let those who admire a vulgar style, abounding in puerile subtleties, and who court a pleasing and popular muse, essay, since pleasure is the object they have in view, to charm the ears of men by a narrative of merely human merits. Those, however who are initiated into the universal science,[3] and have attained to Divine as well as human knowledge, and account the choice of the latter as the real excellence, will prefer those virtues of the emperor which Heaven itself approves, and his pious actions, to his merely human accomplishments; and will leave to inferior encomiasts the task of celebrating his lesser merits.

3 For since our emperor is gifted as well with that sacred wisdom which has immediate reference to God, as with the knowledge which concerns the interests of men; let those who are competent to such a task describe his secular acquirements, great and transcendent as they are, and fraught with advantage to mankind (for all that

characterizes the emperor is great and noble), yet still inferior to his diviner qualifies, to those who stand without the sacred precincts.

4 Let those, however, who are within the sanctuary, and have access to its inmost and untrodden recesses, close the doors against every profane ear, and unfold, as it were, the secret mysteries of our emperor's character to the initiated alone. And let those who have purified their ears in the streams of piety, and raised their thoughts on the soaring wing of the mind itself, join the company which surrounds the Sovereign Lord of all, and learn in silence the divine mysteries.

5 Meanwhile let the sacred oracles, given, not by the spirit of divination (or rather let me say of madness and folly), but by the inspiration of Divine truth,[4] be our instructors in these mysteries; speaking to us of sovereignty, generally: of him who is the Supreme Sovereign of all, and the heavenly array which surrounds the Lord of all; of that exemplar of imperial power which is before us, and that counterfeit coin: and, lastly, of the consequences which result from both. With these oracles, then, to initiate us in the knowledge of the sacred rites, let us essay, as follows, the commencement of our divine mysteries.

Chapter I. The Oration.

1 To-Day is the festival of our great emperor: and we his children rejoice therein, feeling the inspiration of our sacred theme. He who presides over our solemnity is the Great Sovereign himself; he, I mean, who is truly great; of whom I affirm (nor will the sovereign who hears me be offended, but will rather approve of this ascription of praise to God), that HE is above and beyond all created things, the Highest, the Greatest, the most Mighty One; whose throne is the arch of heaven, and the earth the footstool of his feet.[5] His being none can worthily

comprehend; and the ineffable splendor of the glory which surrounds him repels the gaze of every eye from his Divine majesty.

2 His ministers are the heavenly hosts; his armies the supernal powers, who own allegiance to him as their Master, Lord, and King. The countless multitudes of angels, the companies of archangels, the chorus of holy spirits, draw from and reflect his radiance as from the fountains of everlasting light. Yea every light, and specially those divine and incorporeal intelligences whose place is beyond the heavenly sphere, celebrate this august Sovereign with lofty and sacred strains of praise. The vast expanse of heaven, like an azure veil, is interposed between those without, and those who inhabit his royal mansions: while round this expanse the sun and moon, with the rest of the heavenly luminaries (like torch-bearers around the entrance of the imperial palace), perform, in honor of their sovereign, their appointed courses; holding forth, at the word of his command, an ever-burning light to those whose lot is cast in the darker regions without the pale of heaven.

3 And surely when I remember that our own victorious emperor renders praises to this Mighty Sovereign, I do well to follow him, knowing as I do that to him alone we owe that imperial power under which we live. The pious Caesars, instructed by their father's wisdom, acknowledge him as the source of every blessing: the soldiery, the entire body of the people, both in the country and in the cities of the empire, with the governors of the several provinces, assembling together in accordance with the precept of their great Saviour and Teacher, worship him. In short, the whole family of mankind, of every nation, tribe, and tongue, both collectively and severally, however diverse their opinions on other subjects, are unanimous in this one confession;

and, in obedience to the reason implanted in them, and the spontaneous and uninstructed impulse of their own minds, unite in calling on the One and only God.[6]
4 Nay, does not the universal frame of earth acknowledge him her Lord, and declare, by the vegetable and animal life which she produces her subjection to the will of a superior Power? The rivers, flowing with abundant stream, and the perennial fountains, springing from hidden and exhaustless depths, ascribe to him the cause of their marvellous source. The mighty waters of the sea, enclosed in chambers of unfathomable depth, and the swelling surges, which lift themselves on high, and menace as it were the earth itself, shrink back when they approach the shore, checked by the power of his Divine law. The duly measured fall of winter's rain, the rolling thunder, the lightning's flash, the eddying currents of the winds, and the airy courses of the clouds, all reveal his presence to those to whom his Person is invisible.
5 The all-radiant sun, who holds his constant career through the lapse of ages, owns him Lord alone, and obedient to his will, dares not depart from his appointed path. The inferior splendor of the moon, alternately diminished and increased at stated periods, is subject to his Divine command. The beauteous mechanism of the heavens, glittering with the hosts of stars, moving in harmonious order, and preserving the measure of each several orbit, proclaims him the giver of all light: yea, all the heavenly luminaries maintaining at his will and word a grand and perfect unity of motion, pursue the track of their ethereal career, and complete in the lapse of revolving ages their distant course. The alternate recurrence of day and night, the changing seasons, the order and proportion of the universe, all declare the manifold wisdom of [his boundless power]. To him the unseen agencies which hold their course throughout the

expanse of space, render the due tribute of praise. To him this terrestrial globe itself, to him the heavens above, and the choirs beyond the vault of heaven, give honor as to their mighty Sovereign: the angelic hosts greet him with ineffable songs of Praise; and the spirits which draw their being from incorporeal light, adore him as their Creator. The everlasting ages which were before this heaven and earth, with other periods beside them, infinite, and antecedent to all visible creation, acknowledge him the sole and supreme Sovereign and Lord.

6 Lastly, he who is in all, before, and after all,[7] his only begotten, pre-existent Word, the great High Priest of the mighty God, elder than all time and every age, devoted to his Father's glory, first and alone makes intercession with him for the salvation of mankind.[8] Supreme and pre-eminent Ruler of the universe, he shares the glory of his Father's kingdom: for he is that Light, which, transcendent above the universe, encircles the Father's Person, interposing and dividing between the eternal and uncreated Essence and all derived existence: that Light which, streaming from on high, proceeds from that Deity who knows not origin or end, and illumines the super-celestial regions, and all that heaven itself contains, with the radiance of wisdom bright beyond the splendor of the sun. This is he who holds a supreme dominion over this whole world,[9] who is over and in all things, and pervades all things[10] visible and invisible; the Word of God. From whom and by whom our divinely favored emperor, receiving, as it were a transcript of the Divine sovereignty, directs, in imitation of God himself, the administration of this world's affairs.

Chapter II.

1 This only begotten Word of God reigns, from ages which had no beginning, to infinite and endless ages, the partner of his Father's kingdom. And [our emperor] ever

beloved by him, who derives the source of imperial authority from above, and is strong in the power of his sacred title,[11] has controlled the empire of the world for a long period of years.
2 Again, that Preserver of the universe orders these heavens and earth, and the celestial kingdom, consistently with his Father's will. Even so our emperor whom he loves, by bringing those whom he rules on earth to the only begotten Word and Saviour renders them fit subjects of his kingdom.
3 And as he who is the common Saviour of mankind, by his invisible and Divine power as the good shepherd, drives far away from his flock, like savage beasts, those apostate spirits which once flew through the airy tracts above this earth, and fastened on the souls of men;[12] so this his friend, graced by his heavenly favor with victory over all his foes, subdues and chastens the open adversaries of the truth in accordance with the usages of war.
4 He who is the pre-existent Word, the Preserver of all things, imparts to his disciples the seeds of true wisdom and salvation, and at once enlightens and gives them understanding in the knowledge of his Father's kingdom. Our emperor, his friend, acting as interpreter to the Word of God, aims at recalling the whole human race to the knowledge of God; proclaiming clearly in the ears of all, and declaring with powerful voice the laws of truth and godliness to all who dwell on the earth.
5 Once more, the universal Saviour opens the heavenly gates of his Father's kingdom to those whose course is thitherward from this world. Our emperor, emulous of his Divine example, having purged his earthly dominion from every stain of impious error, invites each holy and pious worshiper within his imperial mansions, earnestly desiring to save with all its crew that mighty vessel of

which he is the appointed pilot. And he alone of all who have wielded the imperial power of Rome, being honored by the Supreme Sovereign with a reign of three decennial periods, now celebrates this festival, not, as: his ancestors might have done, in honor of infernal demons, or the apparitions of seducing spirits, or of the fraud and deceitful arts of impious men; but as an act of thanksgiving to him by whom he has thus been honored, and in acknowledgment of the blessings he has received at his hands. He does not, in imitation of ancient usage, defile his imperial mansions with blood and gore, nor propitiate the infernal deities with fire and smoke, and sacrificial offerings; but dedicates to the universal Sovereign a pleasant and acceptable sacrifice, even his own imperial soul, and a mind truly fitted for the service of God.

6 For this sacrifice alone is grateful to him: and this sacrifice our emperor has learned, with purified mind and thoughts, to present as an offering without the intervention of fire and blood, while his own piety, strengthened by the truthful doctrines with which his soul is stored, he sets forth in magnificent language the praises of God, and imitates his Divine philanthropy by his own imperial acts. Wholly devoted to him, he dedicates himself as a noble offering, a first-fruit of that world, the government of which is intrusted to his charge. This first and greatest sacrifice our emperor first dedicates to God; and then, as a faithful shepherd, he offers, not "famous hecatombs of firstling lambs," but the souls of that flock which is the object of his care, those rational beings whom he leads to the knowledge and pious worship of God.

Chapter III.

1 And gladly does he accept and welcome this sacrifice, and commend the presenter of so august and noble an

offering, by protracting his reign to a lengthened period of years, giving larger proofs of his beneficence in proportion to the emperor's holy services to himself. Accordingly he permits him to celebrate each successive festival during great and general prosperity throughout the empire, advancing one of his sons, at the recurrence of each decennial period, to a share of his own imperial power.[13]

2 The eldest, who bears his father's name, he received as his partner in the empire about the close of the first decade of his reign: the second, next in point of age, at the second; and the third in like manner at the third decennial period, the occasion of this our present festival. And now that the fourth period has commenced, and the time of his reign is still further prolonged, he desires to extend his imperial authority by calling still more of his kindred to partake his power; and, by the appointment of the Caesars,[14] fulfills the predictions of the holy prophets, according to what they uttered ages before: "And the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom."[15]

3 And thus the Almighty Sovereign himself accords an increase both of years and of children to our most pious emperor, and renders his sway over the nations of the world still fresh and flourishing, as though it were even now springing up in its earliest vigor. He it is who appoints him this present festival, in that he has made him victorious over every enemy that disturbed his peace: he it is who displays him as an example of true godliness to the human race.

4 And thus our emperor, like the radiant sun, illuminates the most distant subjects of his empire through the presence of the Caesars, as with the far piercing rays of his own brightness. To us who occupy the eastern regions he has given a son worthy of himself;[16] a second and a

third respectively to other departments of his empire, to be, as it were, brilliant reflectors of the light which proceeds from himself. Once more, having harnessed, as it were, under the self-same yoke the four most noble Caesars[17] as horses in the imperial chariot, he sits on high and directs their course by the reins of holy harmony and concord; and, himself every where present, and observant of every event, thus traverses every region of the world.

5 Lastly, invested as he is with a semblance of heavenly sovereignty, he directs his gaze above, and frames his earthly government according to the pattern of that Divine original, feeling strength in its conformity to the monarchy of God. And this conformity is granted by the universal Sovereign to man alone of the creatures of this earth: for he only is the author of sovereign power, who decrees that all should be subject to the rule of one.

6 And surely monarchy far transcends every other constitution and form of government: for that democratic equality of power, which is its opposite, may rather be described as anarchy and disorder. Hence there is one God, and not two, or three, or more: for to assert a plurality of gods is plainly to deny the being of God at all. There is one Sovereign; and his Word and royal Law is one: a Law not expressed in syllables and words, not written or engraved on tablets, and therefore subject to the ravages of time; but the living and self-subsisting Word, who himself is God, and who administers his Father's kingdom on behalf of all who are after him and subject to his power.

7 His attendants are the heavenly hosts; the myriads of God's angelic ministers; the super-terrestrial armies, of unnumbered multitude; and those unseen spirits within heaven itself, whose agency is employed in regulating the order of this world. Ruler and chief of all these is the

royal Word, acting as Regent of the Supreme Sovereign. To him the names of Captain, and great High Priest, Prophet of the Father, Angel of mighty counsel, Brightness of the Father's light, Only begotten Son, with a thousand other titles, are ascribed in the oracles of the sacred writers. And the Father, having constituted him the living Word, and Law and Wisdom the fullness of all blessing, has presented this best and greatest gift to all who are the subjects of his sovereignty.

8 And he himself, who pervades all things, and is every where present, unfolding his Father's bounties to all with unsparing hand, has accorded a specimen of his sovereign power even to his rational creatures of this earth, in that he has provided the mind of man, who is formed after his own image, with Divine faculties, whence it is capable of other virtues also, which flow from the same heavenly source. For he only is wise, who is the only God: he only is essentially good: he only is of mighty power, the Parent of justice, the Father of reason and wisdom, the Fountain of light and life, the Dispenser of truth and virtue: in a word, the Author of empire itself, and of all dominion and power.

Chapter IV.

1 But whence has man this knowledge, and who has ministered these truths to mortal ears? Or whence has a tongue of flesh the power to speak of things so utterly distinct from fleshly or material substance? Who has gazed on the invisible King, and beheld these perfections in him? The bodily sense may comprehend elements and their combinations, of a nature kindred to its own: but no one yet has boasted to have scanned with corporeal eye that unseen kingdom which governs all things nor has mortal nature yet discerned the beauty of perfect wisdom. Who has beheld the face of righteousness through the medium of flesh? And whence came the idea of

legitimate sovereignty and imperial power to man? Whence the thought of absolute dominion to a being composed of flesh and blood? Who declared those ideas which are invisible and undefined, and that incorporeal essence which has no external form, to the mortals of this earth?

2 Surely there was but one interpreter of these things; the all-pervading Word of God.[18] For he is the author of that rational and intelligent being which exists in man; and, being himself one with his Father's Divine nature, he sheds upon his offspring the out-flowings of his Father's bounty. Hence the natural and untaught powers of thought, which all men, Greeks or Barbarians, alike possess: hence the perception of reason and wisdom, the seeds of integrity and righteousness, the understanding of the arts of life, the knowledge of virtue, the precious name of wisdom, and the noble love of philosophic learning. Hence the knowledge of all that is great and good: hence apprehension of God himself, and a life worthy of his worship: hence the royal authority of man, and his invincible lordship over the creatures of this world.

3 And when that Word, who is the Parent of rational beings, had impressed a character on the mind of man according to the image and likeness of God,[19] and had made him a royal creature, in that he gave him alone of all earthly creatures capacity to rule and to obey (as well as forethought and foreknowledge even here, concerning the promised hope of his heavenly kingdom, because of which he himself came, and, as the Parent of his children, disdained not to hold converse with mortal men); he continued to cherish the seeds which himself had sown, and renewed his gracious favors from above; holding forth to all the promise of sharing his heavenly kingdom. Accordingly he called men, and exhorted them to be

ready for their heavenward journey, and to provide themselves with the garment which became their calling. And by an indescribable power he filled the world in every part with his doctrine, expressing by the similitude of an earthly kingdom that heavenly one to which he earnestly invites all mankind, and presents it to them as a worthy object of their hope.

Chapter V.

1 And in this hope our divinely-favored emperor partakes even in this present life, gifted as he is by God with native virtues, and having received into his soul the out-flowings of his favor. His reason he derives from the great Source of all reason: he is wise, and good, and just, as having fellowship with perfect Wisdom, Goodness, and Righteousness: virtuous, as following the pattern of perfect virtue: valiant, as partaking of heavenly strength.
2 And truly may he deserve the imperial title, who has formed his soul to royal virtues, according to the standard of that celestial kingdom. But he who is a stranger to these blessings, who denies the Sovereign of the universe, and owns no allegiance to the heavenly Father of spirits; who invests not himself with the virtues which become an emperor, but overlays his soul with moral deformity and baseness; who for royal clemency substitutes the fury of a savage beast; for a generous temper, the incurable venom of malicious wickedness; for prudence, folly; for reason and wisdom, that recklessness which is the most odious of all vices, for from it, as from a spring of bitterness, proceed the most pernicious fruits; such as inveterate profligacy of life, covetousness, murder, impiety and defiance of God; surely one abandoned to; such vices as these, however he may be deemed powerful through despotic violence, has no true title to the name of Emperor.
3 For how should he whose soul is impressed with a

thousand absurd images of false deities,[20] be able to exhibit a counterpart of the true and heavenly sovereignty? Or how can he be absolute lord of others, who has subjected himself to the dominion of a thousand cruel masters? a slave of low delights and ungoverned lust, a slave of wrongfully-extorted wealth, of rage and passion, as well as of cowardice and terror; a slave of ruthless demons, and soul-destroying spirits?

4 Let, then, our emperor, on the testimony of truth itself, be declared alone worthy of the title; who is dear to the Supreme Sovereign himself; who alone is free, nay, who is truly lord: above the thirst of wealth, superior to sexual desire; victorious even over natural pleasures; controlling, not controlled by, anger and passion.[21] He is indeed an emperor, and bears a title corresponding to his deeds; a Victor in truth, who has gained the victory over those passions which overmaster the rest of men: whose character is formed after the Divine original[22] of the Supreme Sovereign, and whose mind reflects, as in a mirror, the radiance of his virtues. Hence is our emperor perfect in discretion, in goodness, in justice, in courage, in piety, in devotion to God: he truly and only is a philosopher, since he knows himself, and is fully aware that supplies of every blessing are showered on him from a source quite external to himself, even from heaven itself. Declaring the august title of supreme authority by the splendor of his vesture, he alone worthily wears that imperial purple which so well becomes him.

5 He is indeed an emperor, who calls on and implores in prayer the favor of his heavenly Father night and day, and whose ardent desires are fixed on his celestial kingdom. For he knows that present things, subject as they are to decay and death, flowing on and disappearing like a river's stream, are not worthy to be compared with him who is sovereign of all; therefore it is that he longs

for the incorruptible and incorporeal kingdom of God. And this kingdom he trusts he shall obtain, elevating his mind as he does in sublimity of thought above the vault of heaven, and filled with inexpressible longing for the glories which shine there, in comparison with which he deems the precious things of this present world but darkness. For he sees earthly sovereignty to be but a petty and fleeting dominion over a mortal and temporary life, and rates it not much higher than the goatherd's, or shepherd's, or herdsman's power: nay, as more burdensome than theirs, and exercised over more stubborn subjects. The acclamations of the people, and the voice of flattery, he reckons rather troublesome than pleasing, because of the steady constancy of his character, and genuine discipline of his mind.

6 Again, when he beholds the military service of his subjects, the vast array of his armies, the multitudes of horse and foot, entirely devoted to his command, he feels no astonishment, no pride at the possession of such mighty power; but turns his thoughts inward on himself, and recognizes the same common nature there. He smiles at his vesture, embroidered with gold and flowers, and at the imperial purple and diadem itself, when he sees the multitude gaze in wonder, like children at a bugbear, on the splendid spectacle.[23] Himself superior to such feelings, he clothes his soul with the knowledge of God, that vesture, the broidery of which is temperance, righteousness, piety, and all other virtues; a vesture such as truly becomes a sovereign.

7 The wealth which others so much desire, as gold, silver, or precious gems, he regards to be, as they really are, in themselves mere stones and worthless matter, of no avail to preserve or defend from evil. For what power have these things to free from disease, or repel the approach of death? And knowing as he does this truth by

personal experience in the use of these things, he regards the splendid attire of his subjects with calm indifference, and smiles at the childishness of those to whom they prove attractive. Lastly, he abstains from all excess in food and wine, and leaves superfluous dainties to gluttons, judging that such indulgences, however suitable to others, are not so to him, and deeply convinced of their pernicious tendency, and their effect in darkening the intellectual powers of the soul.

8 For all these reasons, our divinely taught and noble-minded emperor, aspiring to higher objects than this life affords, calls upon his heavenly Father as one who longs for his kingdom; exhibits a pious spirit in each action of his life; and finally, as a wise and good instructor, imparts to his subjects the knowledge of him who is the Sovereign Lord of all.

Chapter VI.

1 And God himself, as an earnest of future reward, assigns to him now as it were tricennial crowns[24] composed of prosperous periods of time; and now, after the revolution of three circles of ten years, he grants permission to all mankind to celebrate this general, nay rather, this universal festival. And while those on earth thus rejoice, crowned as it were with the flowers of divine knowledge, surely, we may not unduly suppose that the heavenly choirs, attracted by a natural sympathy, unite their joy with the joy of those on earth: nay, that the Supreme Sovereign himself, as a gracious father, delights in the worship of duteous children, and for this reason is pleased to honor the author and cause of their obedience through a lengthened period of time; and, far from limiting his reign to three decennial circles of years, he extends it to the remotest period, even to far distant eternity. Now eternity[25] in its whole extent is beyond the power of decline or death: its beginning and extent alike

incapable of being scanned by mortal thoughts. Nor will it suffer its central point to be perceived, nor that which is termed its present duration to be grasped by the inquiring mind. Far less, then, the future, or the past: for the one is not, but is already gone; while the future has not yet arrived, and therefore is not. As regards what is termed the present time, it vanishes even as we think or speak, more swiftly than the word itself is uttered. Nor is it possible in any sense to apprehend this time as present; for we must either expect the future, or contemplate the past; the present slips from us, and is gone, even in the act of thought. Eternity, then, in its whole extent, resists and refuses subjection to mortal reason. But it does not refuse to acknowledge its own Sovereign and Lord,[26] and bears him as it were mounted on itself, rejoicing in the fair trappings which he bestows.[27] And he himself, not binding it, as the poet imagined, with a golden chain,[28] but as it were controlling its movements by the reins of ineffable wisdom, has adjusted its months and seasons, its times and years, and the alterations of day and night, with perfect harmony, and has thus attached to itlimits and measures of various kinds. For eternity, being in its nature direct, and stretching onward into infinity, and receiving its name, eternity, as having an everlasting existence,[29] and being similar in all its parts, or rather having no division or distance, progresses only in a line of direct extension. But God, who has distributed it by intermediate sections, and has divided it, like a far extended line, in many points, has included in it a vast number of portions; and though it is in its nature one, and resembles unity itself, he has attached to it a multiplicity of numbers, and has given it, though formless in itself, an endless variety of forms.
5 For first of all he framed in it formless matter, as a substance capable of receiving all forms. He next, by the

power of the number two, imparted quality to matter, and gave beauty to that which before was void of all grace. Again, by means of the number three, he framed a body compounded of matter and form, and presenting the three dimensions of breadth, and length, and depth. Then, from the doubling of the number two, he devised the quaternion of the elements, earth, water, air, and fire, and ordained them to be everlasting sources for the supply of this universe. Again, the number four produces the number ten. For the aggregate of one, and two, and three, and four, is ten.[30] And three multiplied with ten discovers the period of a month: and twelve successive months complete the course of the sun. Hence the revolutions of years, and changes of the seasons, which give grace, like variety of color in painting, to that eternity which before was formless and devoid of beauty, for the refreshment and delight of those whose lot it is to traverse therein the course of life.

6 For as the ground is defined by stated distances for those who run in hope of obtaining the prize; and as the road of those who travel on a distant journey is marked by resting-places and measured intervals, that the traveler's courage may not fail at the interminable prospect; even so the Sovereign of the universe, controlling eternity itself within the restraining power of his own wisdom, directs and turns its course as he judges best. The same God, I say, who thus clothes the once undefined eternity as with fair colors and blooming flowers, gladdens the day with the solar rays; and, while he overspreads the night with a covering of darkness, yet causes the glittering stars, as golden spangles, to shine therein. It is he who lights up the brilliancy of the morning stab the changing splendor of the moon, and the glorious companies of the starry host, and has arrayed the expanse of heaven, like some vast mantle, in colors of

varied beauty. Again, having created the lofty and profound expanse of air, and caused the world in its length and breadth to feel its cooling influence, he decreed that the air itself should be graced with birds of every kind, and left open this vast ocean of space to be traversed by every creature, visible or invisible, whose course is through the tracts of heaven. In the midst of this atmosphere he poised the earth, as it were its center, and encompassed it with the ocean as with a beautiful azure vesture.

7 Having ordained this earth to be at once the home, the nurse, and the mother of all the creatures it contains, and watered it both with rain and water-springs, he caused it to abound in plants and flowers of every species, for the enjoyment of life. And when he had formed man in his own likeness, the noblest of earthly creatures, and dearest to himself, a creature gifted with intellect and knowledge, the child of reason and wisdom, he gave him dominion over all other animals which move and live upon the earth. For man was in truth of all earthly creatures the dearest to God: man, I say, to whom, as an indulgent Father, he has subjected the brute creation; for whom he has made the ocean navigable, and crowned the earth with a profusion of plants of every kind; to whom he has granted reasoning faculties for acquiring all science; under whose control he has placed even the creatures of the deep, and the winged inhabitants of the air; to whom he has permitted the contemplation of celestial objects, and revealed the course and changes of the sun and moon, and the periods of the planets and fixed stars. In short, to man alone of earthly beings has he given commandment to acknowledge him as his heavenly Father, and to celebrate his praises as the Supreme Sovereign of eternity itself.

8 But the unchangeable course of eternity the Creator has

limited by the four seasons of the year, terminating the winter by the approach of spring, and regulating as with an equal balance that season which commences the annual period. Having thus graced the eternal course of time with the varied productions of spring, he added the summer's heat; and then granted as it were a relief of toil by the interval of autumn: and lastly, refreshing and cleansing the season by the showers of winter, he brings it, rendered sleek land glossy, like a noble steed, by these abundant rains, once more to the gates of spring.

9 As soon, then, as the Supreme Sovereign had thus connected his own eternity by these cords of wisdom with the annual circle, he committed it to the guidance of a mighty Governor, even his only begotten Word, to whom, as the Preserver of all creation, he yielded the reins of universal power. And he, receiving this inheritance as from a beneficent Father, and uniting all things both above and beneath the circumference of heaven in one harmonious whole, directs their uniform course; providing with perfect justice whatever is expedient for his rational creatures on the earth, appointing its allotted limits to human life, and granting to all alike permission to anticipate even here the commencement of a future existence. For he has taught them that beyond this present world there is a divine and blessed state of being, reserved for those who have been supported here by the hope of heavenly blessings; and that those who have lived a virtuous and godly life will remove hence to a far better habitation; while he adjudges to those who have been guilty and wicked here a place of punishment according to their crimes.

10 Again, as in the distribution of prizes at the public games, he proclaims various crowns to the victors, and invests each with the rewards of different virtues: but for our good emperor, who is clothed in the very robe of

piety, he declares that a higher recompense of his toils is prepared; and, as a prelude to this recompense, permits us now to assemble at this festival, which is composed of perfect numbers, of decades thrice, and triads ten times repeated.

11 The first of these, the triad, is the offspring of the unit, while the unit is the mother of number itself, and presides over all months, and seasons, and years, and every period of time. It may, indeed, be justly termed the origin, foundation, and principle of all number, and derives its name from its abiding character.[31] For, while every other number is diminished or increased according to the subtraction or addition of others, the unit alone continues fixed and steadfast, abstracted from all multitude and the numbers which are formed from it, and resembling that indivisible essence which is distinct from all things beside, but by virtue of participation in which the nature of all things else subsists.

12 For the unit is the originator of every number, since all multitude is made up by the composition and addition of units; nor is it possible without the unit to conceive the existence of number at all. But the unit itself is independent of multitude, apart from and superior to all number; forming, indeed, and making all, but receiving
13 no increase from any. Kindred to this is the triad; equally indivisible and perfect, the first of those sums which are formed of even and uneven numbers. For the perfect number two, receiving the addition of the unit, forms the triad, the first perfect compound number. And the triad, by explaining what equality is, first taught men justice, having itself an equal beginning, and middle, and end. And it is also an image of the mysterious, most holy, and royal Trinity, which, though itself without beginning or origin, yet contains the germs, the reasons, and causes of the existence of all created things.

14 Thus the power of the triad may justly be regarded as the first cause of all things. Again, the number ten, which contains the end of all numbers, and terminates them in itself, may truly be called a full and perfect number, as comprehending every species and every measure of numbers, proportions, concords, and harmonies. For example, the units by addition form and are terminated by the number ten; and, having this number as their parent, and as it were the limit of their course they round this as the goal of their career.
15 Then they perform a second circuit, and again a third, and a fourth, until the tenth and thus by ten decades they complete the hundredth number. Returning thence to the first starting point, they again proceed to the number ten, and having ten times completed the hundredth number, again they recede, and perform round the same barriers their protracted course, proceeding from themselves back to themselves again, with revolving motion.
16 For the unit is the tenth of ten, and ten units make up a decade, which is itself the limit, the settled goal and boundary of units: it is that which terminates the infinity of number; the term and end of units. Again, the triad combined with the decade, and performing a threefold circuit of tens, produces that most natural number, thirty. For as the triad is in respect to units, so is the number thirty in respect to tens.
17 It is also the constant limit to the course of that luminary which is second to the sun in brightness. For the course of the moon from one conjunction with the sun to the next, completes the period of a month; after which, receiving as it were a second birth, it recommences a new light, and other days, being adorned and honored with thirty units, three decades, and ten triads.
18 In the same manner is the universal reign of our

victorious emperor distinguished by the giver of all good, and now enters on a new sphere of blessing, accomplishing, at present, this tricennalian festival, but reaching forward beyond this to far more distant intervals of time, and cherishing the hope of future blessings in the celestial kingdom; where, not a single sun, but infinite hosts of light surround the Almighty Sovereign, each surpassing the splendor of the sun, glorious and resplendent with rays derived from the everlasting source of light.

19 There the soul enjoys its existence, surrounded by fair and unfading blessings; there is a life beyond the reach of sorrow; there the enjoyment of pure and holy pleasures, and a time of unmeasured and endless duration, extending into illimitable space; not defined by intervals of days and months, the revolutions of years, or the recurrence of times and seasons, but commensurate with a life which knows no end. And this life needs not the light of the sun, nor the lustre of the moon or the starry host, since it has the great Luminary himself, even God the Word, the only begotten Son of the Almighty Sovereign.

20 Hence it is that the mystic and sacred oracles reveal him to be the Sun of righteousness, and the Light which far transcends all light. We believe that he illumines also the thrice-blessed powers of heaven with the rays of righteousness, and the brightness of wisdom, and that he receives truly pious souls, not within the sphere of heaven alone, but into his own bosom, and confirms indeed the assurances which he himself has given.

21 No mortal eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor can the mind in its vesture of flesh understand what things are prepared for those who have been here adorned with the graces of godliness; blessings which await thee too, most pious emperor, to whom alone since the world began has

the Almighty Sovereign of the universe granted power to purify the course of human life: to whom also he has revealed his own symbol of salvation, whereby he overcame the power of death, and triumphed over every enemy. And this victorious trophy, the scourge of evil spirits, thou hast arrayed against the errors of idol worship, and hast obtained the victory not only over all thy impious and savage foes, but over equally barbarous adversaries, the evil spirits themselves.

Chapter VII.

1 For whereas we are composed of two distinct natures, I mean of body and spirit, of which the one is visible to all, the other i invisible, against both these natures two kinds of barbarous and savage enemies, the one invisibly, the other openly, are constantly arrayed. The one oppose our bodies with bodily force: the other with incorporeal assaults besiege the naked soul itself.

2 Again, the visible barbarians, like the wild nomad tribes, no better than savage beasts, assail the nations of civilized men, ravage their country, and enslave their cities, rushing on those who inhabit them like ruthless wolves of the desert, and destroying all who fall under their power. But those unseen foes, more cruel far than barbarians, I mean the soul-destroying demons whose course is through the regions of the air, had succeeded, through the snares of vile polytheism, in enslaving the entire human race, insomuch that they no longer recognized the true God, but wandered in the mazes of atheistic error. For they procured, I know not whence, gods who never anywhere existed, and set him aside who is the only and the true God, as though he were not.

3 Accordingly the generation of bodies was esteemed by them a deity, and so the opposite principle to this, their dissolution and destruction, was also deified. The first, as the author of generative power, was honored with rites

under the name of Venus:[32] the second, as rich, and mighty in dominion over the human race, received the names of Pluto, and Death. For men in those ages, knowing no other than naturally generated life, declared the cause and origin of that life to be divine: and again, believing in no existence after death, they proclaimed Death himself a universal conqueror and a mighty god. Hence, unconscious of responsibility, as destined to be annihilated by death, they lived a life unworthy of the name, in the practice of actions deserving a thousand deaths. No thought of God could enter their minds, no expectation of Divine judgment, no recollection of, no reflection on, their spiritual existence: acknowledging one dread superior, Death, and persuaded that the dissolution of their bodies by his power was final annihilation, they bestowed on Death the title of a mighty, a wealthy god, and hence the name of Pluto.[33] Thus, then, Death became to them a god; nor only so, but whatever else they accounted precious in comparison with death, whatever contributed to the luxuries of life.
4 Hence animal pleasure became to them a god; nutrition, and its production, a god; the fruit of trees, a god; drunken riot, a god; carnal desire and pleasure, a god. Hence the mysteries of Ceres and Proserpine, the rape of the latter, and her subsequent restoration, by Pluto: hence the orgies of Bacchus, and Hercules overcome by drunkenness as by a mightier god: hence the adulterous rites of Cupid and of Venus: hence Jupiter himself infatuated with the love of women, and of Ganymede:[34] hence the licentious legends of deities abandoned to effeminacy and pleasure.
5 Such were the weapons of superstition whereby these cruel barbarians and enemies of the Supreme God afflicted, and indeed entirely subdued, the human race; erecting everywhere the monuments of impiety, and

rearing in every corner the shrines and temples of their false religion.
6 Nay, so far were the ruling powers of those times enslaved by the force of error, as to appease their gods with the blood of their own countrymen and kindred; to whet their swords against those who stood forward to defend the truth; to maintain a ruthless war and raise unholy hands, not against foreign or barbarian foes, but against men l bound to them by the ties of family and affection, against brethren, and kinsmen, and dearest friends, who had resolved, in the practice of virtue and true piety, to honor and worship God.
7 Such was the spirit of madness with which these princes sacrificed to their demon deities men consecrated to the service of the King of kings. On the other hand their victims, as noble martyrs in the cause of true godliness, resolved to welcome a glorious death in preference to life itself, and utterly despised these cruelties. Strengthened, as soldiers of God, with patient fortitude, they mocked at death in all its forms; at fire, and sword, and the torment of crucifixion; at exposure to savage beasts, and drowning in the depths of the sea; at the cutting off and searing of limbs, the digging out of eyes, the mutilation of the whole body; lastly, at famine, the labor of the mines, and captivity: nay, all these sufferings they counted better than any earthly good or pleasure, for the love they bore their heavenly King. In like manner women also evinced a spirit of constancy and courage not inferior to that of men.
8 Some endured the same conflicts with them, and obtained a like reward of their virtue: others, forcibly carried off to be the victims of violence and pollution, welcomed death rather than dishonor; while many, very many more, endured not even to hear the same threats wherewith they were assailed by the provincial

governors, but boldly sustained every variety of torture, and sentence of death in every form.[35] Thus did these valiant soldiers of the Almighty Sovereign maintain the conflict with steadfast fortitude of soul against the hostile forces of polytheism: and thus did these enemies of God and adversaries of man's salvation, more cruel far than the ferocious savage, delight in libations of human blood: thus did their ministers drain as it were the cup of unrighteous slaughter in honor of the demons whom they served, and prepare for them this dread and impious banquet, to the ruin of the human race.

9 In these sad circumstances, what course should the God and King of these afflicted ones pursue? Could he be careless of the safety of his dearest friends or abandon his servants in this great extremity? Surely none could deem him a wary pilot, who, without an effort to save his fellow-mariners should suffer his vessel to sink with all her crew: surely no general could be found so reckless as to yield his own allies, without resistance, to the mercy of the foe: nor can a faithful shepherd regard with unconcern the straying of a single sheep from his flock, but will rather leave the rest in safety, and dare all things for the wanderer's sake, even, if need be, to contend with savage beasts.

10 The zeal, however, of the great Sovereign of all was for no unconscious[36] sheep: his care was exercised for his own faithful host, for those who sustained the battle for his sake: whose conflicts in the cause of godliness he himself approved, and honored those who had returned to his presence with the prize of victory which he only can bestow, uniting them to the angelic choirs. Others he still preserved on earth, to communicate the living seeds of piety to future generations; to be at once eye-witnesses of his vengeance on the ungodly, and narrators 11 of the events.

11 After this he outstretched his arm in judgment on the adversaries, and utterly destroyed them with the stroke of Divine wrath, compelling them, how reluctant soever to confess with their own lips and recant their wickedness, but raising from the ground and exalting gloriously those who had long been oppressed and disclaimed by all.
12 Such were the dealings of the Supreme Sovereign, who ordained an invincible champion to be the minister of his heaven-sent vengeance (for our emperor's surpassing piety delights in the title of Servant of God), and him he has, proved victorious over all that opposed him, having raised him up, an individual against many foes. For they were indeed numberless, being the friends of many evil spirits (though in reality they were nothing, and hence are now no more); but our emperor is one, appointed by, and the representative of, the one Almighty Sovereign. And they, in the very spirit of impiety, destroyed the righteous with cruel slaughter: but he, in imitation of his Saviour, and knowing only how to save men's lives, has spared and instructed in godliness the impious themselves.
13 And so, as truly worthy the name of Victor, he has subdued the twofold race of barbarians; soothing the savage tribes of men by prudent embassies, compelling them to know and acknowledge their superiors, and reclaiming them from a lawless and brutal life to the governance of reason and humanity; at the same time that he proved by the facts themselves that the fierce and ruthless race of unseen spirits had long ago been vanquished by a higher power. For he who is the preserver of the universe had punished these invisible spirits by an invisible judgment: and our emperor, as the delegate of the Supreme Sovereign, has followed up the victory, bearing away the spoils of those who have long since died and mouldered into dust, and distributing the

plunder with lavish hand among the soldiers of his victorious Lord.[37]

Chapter VIII.

1 For as soon as he understood that the ignorant multitudes were inspired with a vain and childish dread of these bugbears of error, wrought in gold and silver, he judged it right to remove these also, like stumbling-stones thrown in the path of men walking in the dark, and henceforward to open a royal road, plain and unobstructed, to all.

2 Having formed this resolution, he considered that no soldiers or military force of any sort was needed for the repression of the evil: a few of his own friends sufficed for this service, and these he sent by a simple expression of his will to visit each several province.

3 Accordingly, sustained by confidence in the emperor's piety and their own personal devotion to God, they passed through the midst of numberless tribes and nations, abolishing this ancient system of error in every city and country. They ordered the priests themselves, in the midst of general laughter and scorn, to bring their gods from their dark recesses to the light of day. They then stripped them of their ornaments, and exhibited to the gaze of all the unsightly reality which had been hidden beneath a painted exterior: and lastly, whatever part of the material appeared to be of value they scraped off and melted in the fire to prove its worth, after which they secured and set apart whatever they judged needful for their purposes, leaving to the superstitious worshipers what was altogether useless, as a memorial of their shame.

4 Meanwhile our admirable prince was himself engaged in a work similar to that we have described. For at the same time that these costly images of the dead were stripped, as we have said, of their precious materials, he

also attacked those composed of brass; causing those to be dragged from their places with ropes, and, as it were, carried away captive, whom the dotage of mythology had esteemed as gods. The next care of our august emperor was to kindle, as it were, a brilliant torch, by the light of which he directed his imperial gaze around, to see if any hidden vestiges of error might yet exist.
5 And as the keen-sighted eagle in its heavenward flight is able to descry from its lofty height the most distant objects on the earth: so did he, whilst residing in the imperial palace of his own fair city, discover, as from a watch-tower, a hidden and fatal snare of souls in the province of Phoenicia. This was a grove and temple, not situated in the midst of any city, or in any public place, as for splendor of effect is generally the case, but apart from the beaten and frequented road, on part of the summit of Mount Lebanon, and dedicated to the foul demon known by the name of Venus.
6 It was a school of wickedness for all the abandoned votaries of impurity and such as destroyed their bodies with effeminacy. Here men undeserving the name forgot the dignity of their sex, and propitiated the demon by their effeminate conduct: here too unlawful commerce of women, and adulterous intercourse, with other horrible and infamous practices, were perpetrated in this temple as in a place beyond the scope and restraint of law.
7 Meantime these evils remained unchecked by the presence of any observer, since no one of fair character ventured to visit such scenes. These proceedings, however, could not escape the vigilance of our august emperor, who, having himself inspected them with characteristic forethought, and judging that such a temple was unfit for the light of heaven, gave orders that the building with its offerings should be utterly destroyed. Accordingly, in obedience to the imperial edict, these

engines of an impure superstition were immediately abolished, and the hand of military force was made instrumental in purging the place. And now those who had heretofore lived without restraint, learned, through the imperial threat of punishment, to practice self-control.

8 Thus did our emperor tear the mask from this system of delusive wickedness, and expose it to the public gaze, at the same time proclaiming openly his Saviour's name to all. No advocate appeared; neither god nor demon, prophet nor diviner, could lend his aid to the detected authors of the imposture. For the souls of men were no longer enveloped in thick darkness: but enlightened by the rays of true godliness, they deplored the ignorance and pitied the blindness of their forefathers, rejoicing at the same time in their own deliverance from such fatal error.[38]

9 Thus speedily, according to the counsel of the mighty God, and through our emperor's agency, was every enemy, whether visible or unseen, utterly removed: and henceforward peace, the happy nurse of youth, extended her reign throughout the world. Wars were no more, for the gods were not: no more did warfare in country or town, no more did the effusion of human blood, distress mankind, as heretofore, when demon-worship and the madness of idolatry prevailed.

Chapter IX.

1 And now we may well compare the present with former things, and review these happy changes in contrast with the evils that are past, and mark the elaborate care with which in ancient times porches and sacred precincts, groves and temples, were prepared in every city for these false deities, and how their shrines were enriched with abundant offerings.

2 The sovereign rulers of those days had indeed a high

regard for the worship of the gods. The nations also and people subject to their power honored them with images both in the country and in every city, nay, even in their houses and secret chambers, according to the religious practice of their fathers. The fruit, however, of this devotion, far different from the peaceful concord which now meets our view, appeared in war, in battles, and seditions, which harassed them throughout their lives, and deluged their countries with blood and civil slaughter.

3 Again, the objects of their worship could hold out to these sovereigns with artful flattery the promise of prophecies, and oracles, and the knowledge of futurity: yet could they not predict their own destruction, nor forewarn themselves of the coming ruin: and surely this was the greatest and most convincing proof of their imposture.

4 Not one of those whose words once were heard with awe and wonder, had announced the glorious advent of the Saviour of mankind,[39] or that new revelation of divine knowledge which he came to give. Not Pythius himself, nor any of those mighty gods, could apprehend the prospect of their approaching desolation; nor could their oracles point at him who was to be their conqueror and destroyer.

5 What prophet or diviner could foretell that their rites would vanish at the presence of a new Deity in the world, and that the knowledge and worship of the Almighty Sovereign should be freely given to all mankind? Which of them foreknew the august and pious reign of our victorious emperor, or his triumphant conquests everywhere over the false demons, or the overthrow of their high places?

6 Which of the heroes has announced the melting down and conversion of the lifeless statues from their useless

forms to the necessary uses of men? Which of the gods have yet had power to speak of their own images thus melted and contemptuously reduced to fragments?
7 Where were the protecting powers, that they should not interpose to save their sacred memorials, thus destroyed by man? Where, I ask, are those who once maintained the strife of war, yet now behold their conquerors abiding securely in the profoundest peace? And where are they who upheld themselves in a blind and foolish confidence, and trusted in these vanities as gods; but who, in the very height of their superstitious error, and while maintaining an implacable war with the champions of the truth, perished by a fate proportioned to their crimes?
8 Where is the giant race whose arms were turned against heaven itself; the hissings of those serpents whose tongues were pointed with impious words against the Almighty King? These adversaries of the Lord of all, confident in the aid of a multitude of gods, advanced to the attack with a powerful array of military force, preceded by certain images of the dead, and lifeless statues, as their defense. On the other, side our emperor, secure in the armor of godliness, opposed to the numbers of the enemy the salutary and life-giving Sign, as at the same time a terror to the foe, and a protection against every harm; and returned victorious at once over the enemy and the demons whom they served.[40] And then, with thanksgiving and praise, the tokens of a grateful spirit, to the Author of his victory, he proclaimed this triumphant Sign, by monuments as well as words, to all mankind, erecting it as a mighty trophy against every enemy in the midst of the imperial city, and expressly enjoining on all to acknowledge this imperishable symbol of salvation as the safeguard of the power of Rome and of the empire of the world.
9 Such were the instructions which he gave to his

subjects generally; but especially to his soldiers, whom he admonished to repose their confidence, not in their weapons, or armor, or bodily strength, but to acknowledge the Supreme God as the giver of every good, and of victory itself.
10 Thus did the emperor himself, strange and incredible as the fact may seem, become the instructor of his army in their religious exercises, and teach them to offer pious prayers in accordance with the divine ordinances, uplifting their hands towards heaven, and raising their mental vision higher still to the King of heaven, on whom they should call as the Author of victory, their preserver, guardian, and helper. He commanded too, that one day should be regarded as a special occasion for religious worship; I mean that which is truly the first and chief of all, the day of our Lord and Saviour; that day the name of which is connected with light, and life, and immortality, and every good.
11 Prescribing the same pious conduct to himself, he honored his Saviour in the chambers of his palace, performing his devotions according to the Divine commands, and storing his mind with instruction through the hearing of the sacred word. The entire care of his household was intrusted to ministers devoted to the service of God, and distinguished by gravity of life and every other virtue; while his trusty body-guards, strong in affection and fidelity to his person, found in their emperor an instructor in the practice of a godly life.
12 Again, the honor with which he regards the victorious Sign is founded on his actual experience of its divine efficacy. Before this the hosts of his enemies have disappeared: by this the powers of the unseen spirits have been turned to flight: through this the proud boastings of God's adversaries have come to nought, and the tongues of the profane and blasphemous been put to silence. By

this Sign the Barbarian tribes were vanquished: through his the rites of superstitious fraud received a just rebuke: by this our emperor, discharging as it were a sacred debt, has performed the crowning good of all, by erecting triumphant memorials of its value in all parts of the world, raising temples and churches on a scale of royal costliness, and commanding all to unite in constructing the sacred houses of prayer.

13 Accordingly these signal proofs of our emperor's magnificence forthwith appeared in the provinces and cities of the empire, and soon shone conspicuously in every country; convincing memorials of the rebuke and overthrow of those impious tyrants who but a little while before had madly dared to fight against God, and, raging like savage dogs, had vented on unconscious buildings that fury which they were unable to level against him; had thrown to the ground and Upturned the very foundations of the houses of prayer, causing them to present the appearance of a city captured and abandoned to the enemy. Such was the exhibition of that wicked spirit whereby they sought as it were to assail God himself, but soon experienced the result of their own madness and folly. But a little time elapsed, when a single blast of the storm of Heaven's displeasure swept them utterly away, leaving neither kindred, nor offspring, nor memorial of their existence among men: for all, numerous as they were, disappeared as in a moment beneath the stroke of Divine vengeance.

14 Such, then, was the fate which awaited these furious adversaries of God: but he who, armed with the salutary Trophy, had alone opposed them (nay rather, not alone, but aided by the presence and the power of him who is the only Sovereign), has replaced the ruined edifices on a greater scale, and made the second far superior to the first. For example, besides erecting various churches to

the honor of God in the city which bears his name, and adorning the Bithynian capital with another on the greatest and most splendid scale, he has distinguished the principal cities of the other provinces by structures of a similar kind.
15 Above all, he has selected two places in the eastern division of the empire, the one in Palestine (since from thence the life-giving stream has flowed as from a fountain for the blessing of all nations), the other in that metropolis of the East which derives its name from that of Antiochus; in which, as the head of that portion of the empire, he has consecrated to the service of God a church of unparalleled size and beauty. The entire building is encompassed by an enclosure of great extent, within which the church itself rises to a vast elevation, of an octagonal form, surrounded by many chambers and courts on every side, and decorated with ornaments of the richest kind.[41]
16 Such was his work here. Again, in the province of Palestine, in that city which was once the seat of Hebrew sovereignty, on the very site of the Lord's sepulchre, he has raised a church of noble dimensions, and adorned a temple sacred to the salutary Cross with rich and lavish magnificence, honoring that everlasting monument, and the trophies of the Saviour's victory over the power of death, with a splendor which no language can describe.
17 In the same country he discovered three places venerable as the localities of three sacred caves: and these also he adorned with costly structures, paying a fitting tribute of reverence to the scene of the first manifestation of the Saviour's presence; while at the second cavern he hallowed the remembrance of his final ascension from the mountain top; and celebrated his mighty conflict, and the victory which crowned it, at the third.[42]

18 All these places our emperor thus adorned in the hope of proclaiming the symbol of redemption to all mankind; that Cross which has in deed repaid his pious zeal; through which his house and throne alike have prospered, his reign has been confirmed for a lengthened series of years, and the rewards of virtue bestowed on his noble sons, his kindred, and their descendants.
19 And surely it is a mighty evidence of the power of that God whom he serves, that he has held the balances of justice with an equal hand, and has apportioned to each party their due reward. With regard to the destroyers of the houses of prayer, the penalty of their impious conduct followed hard upon them: forthwith were they swept away, and left neither race, nor house, nor family behind. On the other hand, he whose pious devotion to his Lord is conspicuous in his every act, who raises royal temples to his honor, and proclaims his name to his subjects by sacred offerings throughout the world, he, I say, has deservedly experienced him to be the preserver and defender of his imperial house and race. Thus clearly have the dealings of God been manifested, and this through the sacred efficacy of the salutary Sign.

Chapter X.

1 Much might indeed be said of this salutary Sign, by those who are skilled in the mysteries of our Divine religion. For it is in very truth the symbol of salvation, wondrous to speak of, more wondrous still to conceive; the appearance of which on earth has thrown the fictions of all false religion from the beginning into the deepest shade, has buried superstitious error in darkness and oblivion, and has revealed to all that spiritual light which enlightens the souls of men, even the knowledge of the only true God.
2 Hence the universal change for the better, which leads men to spurn their lifeless idols, to trample under foot the

lawless rites of their demon deities, and laugh to scorn the time-honored follies of their fathers. Hence, too, the establishment in every place of those schools of sacred learning, wherein men are taught the precepts of saving truth, and dread no more those objects of creation which are seen by the natural eye, nor direct a gaze of wonder at the sun, the moon, or stars; but acknowledge him who is above all these, that invisible Being who is the Creator of them all, and learn to worship him alone.

3 Such are the blessings resulting to mankind from this great and wondrous Sign, by virtue of which the evils which once existed are now no more, and virtues heretofore unknown shine everywhere resplendent with the light of true godliness.

4 Discourses, and precepts, and exhortations to a virtuous and holy life, are proclaimed in the ears of all nations. Nay, the emperor himself proclaims them: and it is indeed a marvel that this mighty prince, raising his voice in the hearing of all the world, like an interpreter of the Almighty Sovereign's will, invites his subjects in every country to the knowledge of the true God.

5 No more, as in former times, is the babbling of impious men heard in the imperial palace; but priests and pious worshipers of God together celebrate his majesty with royal hymns of praise. The name of the one Supreme Ruler of the universe is proclaimed to all: the gospel of glad tidings connects the human race with its Almighty King, declaring the grace and love of the heavenly Father to his children on the earth.

6 His praise is everywhere sung in triumphant strains: the voice of mortal man is blended with the harmony of the angelic choirs in heaven; and the reasoning soul employs the body which invests it as an instrument for sounding forth a fitting tribute of praise and adoration to his name. The nations of the East and the West are instructed at the

same moment in his precepts: the people of the Northern and Southern regions unite with one accord, under the influence of the same principles and laws, in the pursuit of a godly life, in praising the one Supreme God, in acknowledging his only begotten Son their Saviour as the source of every blessing, and our emperor as the one ruler on the earth, together with his pious sons.

7 He himself, as a skillful pilot, sits on high at the helm of state, and directs the vessel with unerring course, conducting his people as it were with favoring breeze to a secure and tranquil haven. Meanwhile God himself, the great Sovereign, extends the right hand of his power from above for his protection, giving him victory over every foe, and establishing his empire by a lengthened period of years: and he will bestow on him yet higher blessings, and confirm in every deed the truth of his own promises. But on these we may not at present dwell; but must await the change to a better world: for it is not given to mortal eyes or ears of flesh, fully to apprehend the things of God.[43]

Chapter XI.

1 And now, victorious and mighty Constantine, in this discourse, whose noble argument is the glory of the Almighty King, let me lay before thee some of the mysteries of his sacred truth: not as presuming to instruct thee, who art thyself taught of God; nor to disclose to thee those secret wonders which he himself, not through the agency of man, but through our common Saviour, and the frequent light of his Divine presence has long since revealed and unfolded to thy view: but in the hope of leading the unlearned to the light, and displaying before those who know them not the causes and motives of thy pious deeds.

2 True it is that thy noble efforts for the daily worship and honor of the Supreme God throughout the habitable

world, are the theme of universal praise. But those records of gratitude to thy Saviour and Preserver which thou hast dedicated in our own province of Palestine, and in that city from which as from a fountain-head the Saviour Word[44] has issued forth to all mankind; and again, the hallowed edifices and consecrated temples which thou hast raised as trophies of his victory over death; and those lofty and noble structures, imperial monuments of an imperial spirit, which thou hast erected in honor of the everlasting memory of the Saviour's tomb the cause, I say, of these things is not equally obvious to all.

3 Those, indeed, who are enlightened in heavenly knowledge by the power of the Divine Spirit, well understand the cause, and justly admire and bless thee for that counsel and resolution which Heaven itself inspired. On the other hand the ignorant and spiritually blind regard these designs with open mockery and scorn, and deem it a strange and unworthy thing indeed that so mighty a prince should waste his zeal on the graves and monuments of the dead.

4 "Were it not better," such a one might say, "to cherish those rites which are hallowed by ancient usage; to seek the favor of those gods and heroes whose worship is observed in every province; instead of rejecting and disclaiming them, because subject to the calamities incident to man? Surely they may claim equal honors with him who himself has suffered: or, if they are to be rejected, as not exempt from the sorrows of humanity, the same award would justly be pronounced respecting him." Thus, with important and contracted brow, might he give utterance in pompous language to his self-imagined wisdom.

5 Filled with compassion for this ignorance, the gracious Word of our most beneficent Father freely invites, not

such a one alone, but all who are in the path of error, to receive instruction in Divine knowledge; and has ordained the means of such instruction throughout the world, in every country and village, in cultivated and desert lands alike, and in every city: and, as a gracious Saviour and Physician of the soul, calls on the Greek and the Barbarian, the wise and the unlearned, the rich and the poor, the servant and his master, the subject and his lord, the ungodly, the profane, the ignorant, the evil-doer, the blasphemer, alike to draw near, and hasten to receive his heavenly cure. And thus in time past had he clearly announced to all the pardon of former transgressions, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."[45] And again, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."[46] And he adds the reason, saying, "For they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."[47] And again, "I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent."[48]

6 Hence it is only for those who are themselves instructed in Divine things and understand the motives of that zeal of which these works are the result, to appreciate the more than human impulse by which our emperor was guided, to admire his piety toward God, and to believe his care for the memorial of our Saviour's resurrection to be a desire imparted from above, and truly inspired by that Sovereign, to be whose faithful servant and minister for good is his proudest boast.

7 In full persuasion, then, of thy approval, most mighty emperor, I desire at this present time to proclaim to all the reasons and motives of thy pious works. I desire to stand as the interpreter of thy designs, to explain the counsels of a soul devoted to the love of God. I propose to teach all men, what all should know who care to understand the principles on which our Saviour God

employs his power, the reasons for which he who was the pre-existent Controller of all things at length descended to us from heaven: the reasons for which he assumed our nature, and submitted even to the power of death. I shall declare the causes of that immortal life which followed, and of his resurrection from the dead. Once more, I shall adduce convincing proofs and arguments, for the sake of those who yet need such testimony: and now let me commence my appointed task.

8 Those who transfer the worship due to that God who formed and rules the world to the works of his hand; who hold the sun and moon, or other parts of this material system, nay, the elements themselves, earth, water, air, and fire, in equal honor with the Creator of them all; who give the name of gods to things which never would have had existence, or even name, except as obedient to that Word of God who made the world: such persons in my judgment resemble those who overlook the master hand which gives its magnificence to a royal palace; and, while lost in wonder at its roofs and walls, the paintings of varied beauty and coloring which adorn them, and its gilded ceilings and sculptures, ascribe to them the praise of that skill which belongs to the artist whose work they are: whereas they should assign the cause of their wonder, not to these visible objects, but to the architect himself, and confess that the proofs of skill are indeed manifest, but that he alone is the possessor of that skill who has made them what they are.

9 Again, well might we liken those to children, who should admire the seven-stringed lyre, and disregard him who invented or has power to use it: or those who forget the valiant warrior, and adorn his spear and shield with the chaplet of victory: or, lastly, those who hold the squares and streets, the public buildings, temples, and gymnasia of a great and royal city in equal honor with its

founder; forgetting that their admiration is due, not to lifeless stones, but to him whose wisdom planned and executed these mighty works.
10 Not less absurd is it for those who regard this universe with the natural eye to ascribe its origin to the sun, or moon, or any other heavenly body. Rather let them confess that these are themselves the works of a higher wisdom, remember the Maker and Framer of them all, and render to him the praise and honor above all created objects. Nay rather, inspired by the sight of these very objects, let them address themselves with full purpose of heart to glorify and worship him who is now invisible to mortal eye, but perceived by the clear and unclouded vision of the soul, the supremely sovereign Word of God. To take the instance of the human body: no one has yet conferred the attribute of wisdom on the eyes, or head, the hands, or feet, or other members, far less on the outward clothing, of a wise and learned man: no one terms the philosopher's household furniture and utensils, wise: but every rational person admires that invisible and secret power, the mind of the man himself.
11 How much more, then, is our admiration due, not to the visible mechanism of the universe, material as it is, and formed of the selfsame elements; but to that invisible Word who has moulded and arranged it all, who is the only-begotten Son of God, and whom the Maker of all things, who far transcends all being, has begotten of himself, and appointed Lord and Governor of this universe?
12 For since it was impossible that perishable bodies, or the rational spirits which he had created, should approach the Supreme God, by reason of their immeasurable distance from his perfections, for he is unbegotten, above and beyond all creation, ineffable, inaccessible, unapproachable, dwelling, as his holy word assures us,[49]

in the light which none can enter; but they were created from nothing, and are infinitely far removed from his unbegotten Essence; well has the all-gracious and Almighty God interposed as it were an intermediate Power[50] between himself and them, even the Divine omnipotence of his only-begotten Word. And this Power, which is in perfect nearness and intimacy of union, with the Father which abides in him, and shares his secret counsels, has yet condescended, in fullness of grace, as it were to conform itself to those who are so far removed from the supreme majesty of God. How else, consistently with his own holiness could he who is far above and beyond all things unite himself to corruptible and corporeal matter? Accordingly the Divine Word, thus connecting himself with this universe, and receiving into his hands the reins, as it were, of the world, turns and directs it as a skillful charioteer according to his own will and pleasure

13 The proof of these assertions is evident. For supposing that those component parts of the world which we call elements, as earth, water, air, and fire, the nature of which is manifestly without intelligence, are self-existent; and if they have one common essence, which they who are skilled in natural science call the great receptacle, mother, and nurse of all things; and if this itself be utterly devoid of shape and figure, of soul and reason; whence shall we say it has obtained its present form and beauty? To what shall we ascribe the distinction of the elements, or the union of things contrary in their very nature? Who has commanded the liquid water to sustain the heavy element of earth? Who has turned back the waters from their downward course, and carried them aloft in clouds? Who has bound the force of fire, and caused it to lie latent in wood, and to combine with substances most contrary to itself? Who has mingled the

cold air with heat, and thus reconciled the enmity of opposing principles? Who has devised the continuous succcession of the human race, and given it as it were an endless term of duration? Who has moulded the male and female form, adapted their mutual relations with perfect harmony, and given one common principle of production to every living creature? Who changes the character of the fluid and corruptible seed, which in itself is void of reason, and gives it its prolific power? Who is at this moment working these and ten thousand effects more wonderful than these, nay, surpassing all wonder, and with invisible influence is daily and hourly perpetuating the production of them all?

14 Surely the wonder-working and truly omnipotent Word of God may well be deemed the efficient cause of all these things: that Word who, diffusing himself through all creation, pervading height and depth with incorporeal energy, and embracing the length and breadth of the universe within his mighty grasp, has compacted and reduced to order this entire system, from whose unreasoned and formless matter he has framed for himself an instrument of perfect harmony, the nicely balanced chords and notes of which he touches with all-wise and unerring skill. He it is who governs the sun, and moon, and the other luminaries of heaven by inexplicable laws, and directs their motions for the service of the universal whole.

15 It is this Word of God who has stooped to the earth on which we live, and created the manifold species of animals, and the fair varieties of the vegetable world. It is this same Word who has penetrated the recesses of the deep, has given their being to the finny race, and produced the countless forms of life which there exist. It is he who fashions the burden of the womb, and informs it in nature's laboratory with the principle of life. By him

the fluid and heavy moisture is raised on high, and then, sweetened by a purifying change, descends in measured quantities to the earth, and at stated seasons in more profuse supply.

16 Like a skillful husbandman, he fully irrigates the land, tempers the moist and dry in just proportion, diversifying the whole with brilliant flowers, with aspects of varied beauty, with pleasant fragrance, with alternating varieties of fruits, and countless gratifications for the taste of men. But why do I dare essay a hopeless task, to recount the mighty works of the Word of God, and describe an energy which surpasses mortal thought? By some, indeed, he has been termed the Nature of the universe, by others, the World-Soul, by others, Fate. Others again have declared him to be the most High God himself, strangely confounding things most widely different; bringing down to this earth, uniting to a corruptible and material body, and assigning to that supreme and unbegotten Power who is Lord of all an intermediate place between irrational animals and rational mortals on the one hand, and immortal beings on the other.[51]

Chapter XII.

1 On the other hand, the sacred doctrine teaches that he who is the supreme Source of good, and Cause of all things, is beyond all comprehension, and therefore inexpressible by word, or speech, or name; surpassing the power, not of language only, but of thought itself. Uncircumscribed by place, or body; neither in heaven, nor in ethereal space, nor in any other part of the universe; but entirely independent of all things else, he pervades the depths of unexplored and secret wisdom. The sacred oracles teach us to acknowledge him as the only true God,[52] apart from all corporeal essence, distinct from all subordinate ministration. Hence it is said that all things are from him, but not through him.[53]

2 And he himself dwelling as Sovereign in secret and undiscovered regions of unapproachable light, ordains and disposes all things by the single power of his own will. At his will whatever is, exists; without that will, it cannot be. And his will is in every case for good, since he is essentially Goodness itself. But he through whom are all things, even God the Word, proceeding in an ineffable manner from the Father above, as from an everlasting and exhaustless fountain, flows onward like a river with a full and abundant stream of power for the preservation of the universal whole.

3 And now let us select an illustration from our own experience. The invisible and undiscovered mind within us, the essential nature of which no one has ever known, sits as a monarch in the seclusion of his secret chambers, and alone resolves on our course of action. From this proceeds the only-begotten word from its father's bosom, begotten in a manner and by a power inexplicable to us; and is the first messenger of its father's thoughts, declares his secret counsels, and, conveying itself to the ears of others, accomplishes his designs.

4 And thus the advantage of this faculty is enjoyed by all: yet no one has ever yet beheld that invisible and hidden mind, which is the parent of the word itself.[54] In the same manner, or rather in a manner which far surpasses all likeness or comparison, the perfect Word of the Supreme God, as the only-begotten Son of the Father (not consisting in the power of utterance, nor comprehended in syllables and parts of speech, nor conveyed by a voice which vibrates on the air; but being himself the living and effectual Word of the most High, and subsisting personally as the Power and Wisdom of God),[55] proceeds from his Father's Deity and kingdom.[56] Thus, being the perfect Offspring of a perfect Father, and the common Preserver of all things, he diffuses himself

with living power throughout creation, and pours from his own fullness abundant supplies of reason,[57] wisdom, light, and every other blessing, not only on objects nearest to himself, but on those most remote, whether in earth, or sea, or any other sphere of being.
5 To all these he appoints with perfect equity their limits, places, laws, and inheritance, allotting to each their suited portion according to his sovereign will. To some he assigns the super-terrestrial regions, to others heaven itself as their habitation: others he places in ethereal space, others in air, and others still on earth. He it is who transfers mankind from hence to another sphere, impartially reviews their conduct here, and bestows a recompense according to the life and habits of each.
6 By him provision is made for the life and food, not of rational creatures only, but also of the brute creation, for the service of men; and while to the latter he grants the enjoyment of a perishable and fleeting term of existence, the former he invites to a share in the possession of immortal life. Thus universal is the agency of the Word of God: everywhere present, and pervading all things by the power of his intelligence, he looks upward to his Father, and governs this lower creation, inferior to and consequent upon himself, in accordance with his will, as the common Preserver of all things.
7 Interme- diate, as it were, and attracting the created to the uncreated Essence, this Word of God exists as an unbroken bond between the two, uniting things most widely different by an inseparable tie. He is the Providence which rules the universe; the guardian and director of the whole: he is the Power and Wisdom of God the only-begotten God, the Word begotten of God himself. For "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him and without him was not anything

made that hath been made"; as we learn from the words of the sacred writer.[58] Through his vivifying power all nature grows and flourishes, refreshed by his continual showers, and invested with a vigor and beauty ever new.
8 Guiding the reigns of the universe, he holds its onward course in conformity to the Father's will and moves, as it were, the helm of this mighty ship. This glorious Agent, the only-begotten Son of the Supreme God, begotten by the Father as his perfect Offspring, the Father has given to this world as the highest of all goods infusing his word, as spirit into a lifeless body, into unconscious nature; imparting light and energy to that which in itself was a rude, inanimate, and formless mass, through the Divine power. Him therefore it is ours to acknowledge and regard as everywhere present, and giving life to matter and the elements of nature:[59] in him we see Light, even the spiritual offspring of inexpressible Light: one indeed in essence, as being the Son of one Father; but possessing in himself many and varied powers.
9 The world is indeed divided into many parts; yet let us not therefore suppose that there are many independent Agents: nor, though creation's works be manifold, let us thence assume the existence of many gods. How grievous the error of those childish and infatuated advocates of polytheistic worship, who deify the constituent parts of the universe, and divide into many that system which is only one!
10 Such conduct resembles theirs who should abstract the eyes of an individual man, and term them the man himself, and the ears, another man, and so the head: or again, by an effort of thought should separate the neck, the breast and shoulders, the feet and hands,: or other members, nay, the very powers of sense, and thus pronounce an individual to be a multitude of men. Such folly must surely be rewarded with contempt by men of

sense. Yet such is he who from the component parts of a single world can devise for himself a multitude of gods, or even deem that world which is the work of a Creator, and consists of many parts, to be itself a god:[60] not knowing that the Divine Nature can in no sense be divisible into parts; since, if compounded, it must be so through the agency of another power; and that which is so compounded can never be Divine. How indeed could it be so, if composed of unequal and dissimilar, and hence of worse and better elements? Simple, indivisible, uncompounded, the Divine Nature exists at an infinite elevation above the visible constitution of this world.

11 And hence we are assured by the clear testimony of the sacred Herald,[61] that the Word of God, who is before all things, must be the sole Preserver of all intelligent beings: while God, who is above all, and the Author of the generation of the Word, being himself the Cause of all things, is rightly called the Father of the Word, as of his only-begotten Son, himself acknowledging no superior Cause. God, therefore, himself is One, and from him proceeds the one only-begotten Word, the omnipresent Preserver of all things. And as the many-stringed lyre is composed of different chords, both sharp and flat, some slightly, others tensely strained, and others intermediate between-the two extremes, yet all attuned according to the rules of harmonic art; even so this material world, compounded as it is of many elements, containing opposite and antagonist principles, as moisture and dryness, cold and heat, yet blended into one harmonious whole, may justly be termed a mighty instrument framed by the hand of God: an instrument on which the Divine Word, himself not composed of parts or opposing principles, but indivisible and uncompounded, performs with perfect skill, and produces a melody at once accordant with the will of his Father the Supreme

Lord of all, and glorious to himself. Again, as there are manifold external and internal parts and members comprised in a single body, yet one invisible soul, one undivided and incorporeal mind pervades the whole; so is it in this creation, which, consisting of many parts, yet is but one: and so the One mighty, yea, Almighty Word of God, pervading all things, and diffusing himself with undeviating energy throughout this universe, is the Cause of all things that exist therein.

12 Survey the compass of this visible world. Seest thou not how the same heaven contains within itself the countless courses and companies of the stars? Again, the sun is one, and yet eclipses many, nay all other luminaries, by the surpassing glory of his rays. Even so, as the Father himself is One, his Word is also One, the perfect Son of that perfect Father. Should any one object because they are not more, as well might he complain that there are not many suns, or moons, or worlds, and a thousand things beside; like the madman, who would fain subvert the fair and perfect course of Nature herself. As in the visible, so also in the spiritual world: in the one the same sun diffuses his light throughout this material earth; in the other the One Almighty Word of God illumines all things with invisible and secret power.

13 Again, there is in man one spirit, and one faculty of reason, which yet is the active cause of numberless effects. The same mind, instructed in many things, will essay to cultivate the earth, to build and guide a ship, and construct houses: nay, the one mind and reason of man is capable of acquiring knowledge in a thousand forms: the same mind shall understand geometry and astronomy, and discourse on the rules of grammar, and rhetoric, and the healing art. Nor will it excel in science only, but in practice too: and yet no one has ever supposed the existence of many minds in one human form, nor

expressed his wonder at a plurality of being in man, because he is thus capable of varied knowledge.
14 Suppose one were to find a shapeless mass of clay, to mould it with his hands, and give it the form of a living creature; the head in one figure, the hands and feet in another, the eyes and cheeks in a third, and so to fashion the ears, the mouth and nose, the breast and shoulders, according to the rules of the plastic art. The result, indeed, is a variety of figure, of parts and members in the one body; yet must we not suppose it the work of many hands, but ascribe it entirely to the skill of a single artist, and yield the tribute of our praise to him who by the energy of a single mind has framed it all. The same is true of the universe itself, which is one, though consisting of many parts: yet surely we need not suppose many creative powers, nor invent a plurality of gods. Our duty is to adore the all-wise and all-perfect agency of him who is indeed the Power and the Wisdom of God, whose undivided force and energy pervades and penetrates the universe, creating and giving life to all things, and furnishing to all, collectively and severally, those manifold supplies of which he is himself the source.
15 Even so one and the same impression of the solar rays illumines the air at once, gives light to the eyes, warmth to the touch, fertility to the earth, and growth to plants. The same luminary constitutes the course of time, governs the motions of the stars, performs the circuit of the heavens, imparts beauty to the earth, and displays the power of God to all: and all this he performs by the sole and unaided force of his own nature. In like manner fire has the property of refining gold, and fusing lead, of dissolving wax, of parching clay, and consuming wood; producing these varied effects by one and the same burning power.
16 So also the Supreme Word of God, pervading all

things, everywhere existent, everywhere present in heaven and earth, governs and directs the visible and invisible creation, the sun, the heaven, and the universe itself, with an energy inexplicable in its nature, irresistible in its effects. From him, as from an everlasting fountain, the sun, the moon, and stars receive their light: and he forever rules that heaven which he has framed as the fitting emblem of his own greatness. The angelic and spiritual powers, the incorporeal and intelligent beings which exist beyond the sphere of heaven and earth, are filled by him with light and life, with wisdom and virtue, with all that is great and good, from his own peculiar treasures. Once more, with one and the same creative skill, he ceases not to furnish the elements with substance, to regulate the union and combinations, the forms and figures, and the innumerable qualities of organized bodies; preserving the varied distinctions of animal and vegetable life, of the rational and the brute creation; and supplying all things to all with equal power: thus proving himself the Author, not indeed of the seven-stringed lyre,[62] but of that system of perfect harmony which is the workmanship of the One world-creating Word.[63]

Chapter XIII.

1 And now let us proceed to explain the reasons for which this mighty Word of God descended to dwell with men. Our ignorant and foolish race, incapable of comprehending him who is the Lord of heaven and earth, proceeding from his Father's Deity as from the supreme fountain, ever present throughout the world, and evincing by the clearest proofs his providential care for the interests of man; have ascribed the adorable title of Deity to the sun, and moon, the heaven and the stars of heaven. Nor did they stop here, but deified the earth itself, its products, and the various substances by which animal life

is sustained, and devised images of Ceres, of Proserpine, of Bacchus,[64] and many such as these.
2 Nay, they shrank not from giving the name of gods to the very conceptions of their own minds, and the speech by which those conceptions are expressed; calling the mind itself Minerva, and language Mercury,[65] and affixing the names of Mnemosyne and the Muses to those faculties by means of which science is acquired. Nor was even this enough: advancing still more rapidly in the career of impiety and folly, they deified their own evil passions, which it behooved them to regard with aversion, or restrain by the principles of self-control. Their very lust and passion and impure disease of soul, the members of the body which tempt to obscenity, and even the very uncontrol[66] in shameful pleasure, they described under the titles of Cupid, Priapus, Venus,[67] and other kindred terms.
3 Nor did they stop even here. Degrading their thoughts of God to this corporeal and mortal life, they deified their fellow-men, conferring the names of gods and heroes on those who had experienced the common lot of all, and vainly imagining that the Divine and imperishable Essence could frequent the tombs and monuments of the dead. Nay, more than this: they paid divine honors to animals of various species, and to the most noxious reptiles: they felled trees, and excavated rocks; they provided themselves with brass, and iron, and other metals, of which they fashioned resemblances of the male and female human form, of beasts, and creeping things; and these they made the objects of their worship.
4 Nor did this suffice. To the evil spirits themselves which lurked within their statues, or lay concealed in secret and dark recesses, eager to drink their libations, and inhale the odor of their sacrifices, they ascribed the same divine honors. Once more, they endeavored to

secure the familiar aid of these spirits, and the unseen powers which move through the tracts of air, by charms of forbidden magic, and the compulsion of unhallowed songs and incantations. Again, different nations have adopted different persons as objects of their worship. The Greeks have rendered to Bacchus, Hercules, Aesculapius, Apollo, and others who were mortal men, the titles of gods and heroes. The Egyptians have deified Horus and Isis, Osiris, and other mortals such as these. And thus they who boast of the wondrous skill whereby they have discovered geometry, astronomy, and the science of number, know not, wise as they are in their own conceit, nor understand how to estimate the measure of the power of God, or calculate his exceeding greatness above the nature of irrational and mortal beings.

5 Hence they shrank not from applying the name of gods to the most hideous of the brute creation, to venomous reptiles and savage beasts. The Phoenicians deified Melcatharus, Usorus,[68] and others; mere mortals, and with little claim to honor: the Arabians, Dusaris[69] and Obodas: the Getae, Zamolxis: the Cicilians, Mopsus: and the Thebans, Amphiaraus:[70] in short, each nation has adopted its own peculiar deities, differing in norespect from their fellow-mortals, being simply and truly men. Again, the Egyptians with one consent, the Phoenicians, the Greeks, nay, every nation beneath the sun, have united in worshiping the very parts and elements of the world, and even the produce of the ground itself. And, which is most surprising, though acknowledging the adulterous, unnatural, and licentious crimes of their deities, they have not only filled every city, and village, and district with temples, shrines, and statues in their honor, but have followed their evil example to the ruin of their own souls.

6 We hear of gods and the sons of gods described by

them as heroes and good genii, titles entirely opposed to truth, honors utterly at variance with the qualifies they are intended to exalt. It is as if one who desired to point out the sun and the luminaries of heaven, instead of directing his gaze thitherward, should grope with his hands on the ground, and search for the celestial powers in the mud and mire. Even so mankind, deceived by their own folly and the craft of evil spirits, have believed that the Divine and spiritual Essence which is far above heaven and earth could be compatible with the birth, the affections, and death, of mortal bodies here below. To such a pitch of madness did they proceed, as to sacrifice the dearest objects of their affection to their gods, regardless of all natural ties, and urged by frenzied feeling to slay their only and best beloved children.

7 For what can be a greater proof of madness, than to offer human sacrifice, to pollute every city, and even their own houses, with kindred blood? Do not the Greeks themselves attest this, and is not all history filled with records of the same impiety? The Phoenicians devoted their best beloved and only children as an annual sacrifice to Saturn. The Rhodians, on the sixth day of the month Metageitnion,[71] offered human victims to the same god. At Salamis, a man was pursued in the temple of Minerva Agraulis and Diomede, compelled to run thrice round the altar, afterwards pierced with a lance by the priest, and consumed as a burnt offering on the blazing pile. In Egypt, human sacrifice was most abundant. At Heliopolis three victims were daily offered to Juno, for whom king Amoses, impressed with the atrocity of the practice, commanded the substitution of an equal number of waxen figures. In Chios, and again in Tenedos, a man was slain and offered up to Omadian Bacchus. At Sparta they immolated human beings to Mars. In Crete they did likewise, offering human

sacrifices to Saturn. In Laodicea of Syria a virgin was yearly slain in honor of Minerva, for whom a hart is now the substitute. The Libyans and Carthaginians appeased their gods with human victims. The Dumateni of Arabia buried a boy annually beneath the altar. History informs us that the Greeks without exception, the Thracians also, and Scythians, were accustomed to human sacrifice before they marched forth to battle. The Athenians record the immolation of the virgin children of Leus,[72] and the daughter of Erechtheus.[73] Who knows not that at this day a human victim is offered in Rome itself at the festival of Jupiter Latiaris?

8 And these facts are confirmed by the testimony of the most approved philosophers. Diodorus, the epitomizer of libraries,[74] affirms that two hundred of the noblest youths were sacrificed to Saturn by the Libyan people, and that three hundred more were voluntarily offered by their own parents. Dionysius, the compiler of Roman history,[75] expressly says that Jupiter and Apollo demanded human sacrifices of the so-called Aborigines, in Italy. He relates that on this demand they offered a proportion of all their produce to the gods; but that, because of their refusal to slay human victims, they became involved in manifold calamities, from which they could obtain no release until they had decimated themselves, a sacrifice of life which proved the desolation of their country.

9 Such and so great were the evils which of old afflicted the whole human race. Nor was this the full extent of their misery: they groaned beneath the pressure of other evils equally numerous and irremediable. All nations, whether civilized or barbarous, throughout the world, as if actuated by a demoniac frenzy, were infected with sedition as with some fierce and terrible disease: insomuch that the human family was irreconcilably divided against itself; the great system of society was

distracted and torn asunder; and in every corner of the earth men stood opposed to each other, and strove with fierce contention on questions of law and government.
10 Nay, more than this: with passions aroused to fury, they engaged in mutual conflicts, so frequent that their lives were passed as it were in uninterrupted warfare. None could undertake a journey except as prepared to encounter an enemy in the very country and villages the rustics girded on the sword, provided themselves with armor rather than with the implements of rural labor, and deemed it noble exploit to plunder and enslave any who belonged to a neighboring state.
11 Nay, more than this: from the fables they had themselves devised respecting their own deities, they deduced occasions for a vile and abandoned life, and wrought the ruin of body and soul by licentiousness of every kind. Not content with this, they even overstepped the bounds which nature had defined, and together committed incredible and nameless crimes, "men with men (in the words of the sacred writer) working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due."
12 Nor did they stop even here; but perverted their natural thoughts of God, and denied that the course of this world was directed by his providential care, ascribing the existence and constitution of all things to the blind operation of chance, or the necessity of fate.
13 Once more: believing that soul and body were alike dissolved by death, they led a brutish life, unworthy of the name: careless of the nature or existence of the soul, they dreaded not the tribunal of Divine justice, expected no reward of virtue, nor thought of chastisement as the penalty of an evil life.
14 Hence it was that whole nations, a prey to wickedness in all its forms, were wasted by the effects of their own

brutality: some living in the practice of most vile and lawless incest with mothers, others with sisters, and others again corrupting their own daughters. Some were found who slew their confiding guests; others who fed on human flesh; some strangled, and then feasted on, their aged men; others threw them alive to dogs. The time would fail me were I to attempt to describe the multifarious symptoms of the inveterate malady which had asserted its dominion over the whole human race.

15 Such, and numberless others like these, were the prevailing evils, on account of which the gracious Word of God, full of compassion for his human flock, had long since, by the ministry of his prophets, and earlier still, as well as later, by that of men distinguished by pious devotion to God, invited those thus desperately afflicted to their own cure; and had, by means of laws, exhortations, and doctrines of every kind, proclaimed to man the principles and elements of true godliness. But when for mankind, distracted and torn as I have said, not indeed by wolves and savage beasts, but by ruthless and soul-destroying spirits of evil, human power no longer sufficed, but a help was needed superior to that of man; then it was that the Word of God, obedient to his all-gracious Father's will, at length himself appeared, and most willingly made his abode amongst us.

16 The causes of his advent I have already described, induced by which he condescended to the society of man; not in his wonted form and manner, for he is incorporeal, and present everywhere throughout the world, proving by his agency both in heaven and earth the greatness of his almighty power, but in a character new and hitherto unknown. Assuming a mortal body, he deigned to associate and converse with men; desiring, through the medium of their own likeness, to save our mortal race.

Chapter XIV.

1 And now let us explain the cause for which the incorporeal Word of God assumed this mortal body as a medium of intercourse with man. How, indeed, else than in human form could that Divine and impalpable, that immaterial and invisible Essence manifest itself to those who sought for God in created and earthly objects, unable or unwilling otherwise to discern the Author and Maker of all things?
2 As a fitting means, therefore, of communication with mankind, he assumed a mortal body, as that with which they were themselves familiar; for like, it is proverbially said, loves its like. To those, then, whose affections were engaged by visible objects, who looked for gods in statues and lifeless images, who imagined the Deity to consist in material and corporeal substance, nay, who conferred on men the title of divinity, the Word of God presented himself in this form.
3 Hence he procured for himself this body as a thrice-hallowed temple, a sensible habitation of an intellectual power; a noble and most holy form, of far higher worth than any lifeless statue. The material and senseless image, fashioned by base mechanic hands, of brass or iron, of gold or ivory, wood or stone, may be a fitting abode for evil spirits: but that Divine form, wrought by the power of heavenly wisdom, was possessed of life and spiritual being; a form animated by every excellence, the dwelling-place of the Word of God, a holy temple of the holy God.
4 Thus the indwelling Word[76] conversed with and was known to men, as kindred with themselves; yet yielded not to passions such as theirs, nor owned, as the natural soul, subjection to the body. He parted not with aught of his intrinsic greatness, nor changed his proper Deity. For as the all-pervading radiance of the sun receives no stain from contact with dead and impure bodies; much less can

the incorporeal power of the Word of God be injured in its essential purity, or part with any of its greatness, from spiritual contact with a human body.

5 Thus, I say, did our common Saviour prove himself the benefactor and preserver of all, displaying his wisdom through the instrumentality of his human nature, even as a musician uses the lyre to evince his skill. The Grecian myth tells us that Orpheus had power to charm ferocious beasts, and tame their savage spirit, by striking the chords of his instrument with a master hand: and this story is celebrated by the Greeks, and generally believed, that an unconscious instrument could subdue the untamed brute, and draw the trees from their places, in obedience to its melodious power. But he who is the author of perfect harmony, the all-wise Word of God, desiring to apply every remedy to the manifold diseases of the souls of men, employed that human nature which is the workmanship of his own wisdom, as an instrument by the melodious strains of which he soothed, not indeed the brute creation, but savages endued with reason; healing each furious temper, each fierce and angry passion of the soul, both in civilized and barbarous nations, by the remedial power of his Divine doctrine. Like a physician of perfect skill, he met the diseases of their souls who sought for God in nature and in bodies, by a fitting and kindred remedy, and showed them God in human form.

6 And then, with no less care for the body than the soul, he presented before the eyes of men wonders and signs, as proofs of his Divine power, at the same time instilling into their ears of flesh the doctrines which he himself uttered with a corporeal tongue. In short, he performed all his works through the medium of that body which he had assumed for the sake of those who else were incapable of apprehending his Divine nature.

7 In all this he was the servant of his Father's will,

himself remaining still the same as when with the Father; unchanged in essence, unimpaired in nature, unfettered by the trammels of mortal flesh, nor hindered by his abode in a human body from being elsewhere present.[77]
8 Nay, at the very time of his intercourse with men, he was pervading all things, was with and in the Father, and even then was caring for all things both in heaven and earth. Nor was he precluded, as we are, from being present everywhere, or from the continued exercise of his Divine power. He gave of his own to man, but received nothing in return: he imparted of his Divine power to mortality, but derived no accession from mortality itself.
9 Hence his human birth to him brought no defilement; nor could his impassible Essence suffer at the dissolution of his mortal body. For let us suppose a lyre to receive an accidental injury, or its chord to be broken; it does not follow that the performer on it suffers: nor, if a wise man's body undergo punishment, can we fairly assert that his wisdom, or the soul within him, are maimed or burned.
10 Far less can we affirm that the inherent power of the Word sustained any detriment from his bodily passion, any more than, as in the instance we have already used, the solar rays which are shot from heaven to earth contract defilement, though in contact with mire and pollution of every kind. We may, indeed, assert that these things partake of the radiance of the light, but not that the light is contaminated, or the sun defiled, by this contact with other bodies.
11 And indeed these things are themselves not contrary to nature; but the Saviour, the incorporeal Word of God, being Life and spiritual Light itself, whatever he touches with Divine and incorporeal power must of necessity become endued with the intelligence of light and life. Thus, if he touch a body, it becomes enlightened and

sanctified, is at once delivered from all disease, infirmity, and suffering, and that which before was lacking is supplied by a portion of his fullness.

12 And such was the tenor of his life on earth; now proving the sympathies of his human nature with our own, and now revealing himself as the Word of God: wondrous and mighty in his works as God; foretelling the events of the far distant future; declaring in every act, by signs, and wonders, and supernatural powers, that Word whose presence was so little known; and finally, by his Divine teaching, inviting the souls of men to prepare for those mansions which are above the heavens.

Chapter XV.

1 What now remains, but to account for those which are the crowning facts of all; I mean his death, so far and widely known, the manner of his passion, and the mighty miracle of his resurrection after death: and then to establish the truth of these events by the clearest testimonies?

2 For the reasons detailed above he used the instrumentality of a mortal body, as a figure becoming his Divine majesty, and like a mighty sovereign employed it as his interpreter in his intercourse with men, performing all things consistently with his own Divine power. Supposing, then, at the end of his sojourn among men, he had by any other means suddenly withdrawn himself from their sight, and, secretly removing that interpreter of himself, the form which he had assumed, had hastened to flee from death, and afterwards by his own act had consigned his mortal body to corruption and dissolution: doubtless in such a case he would have been deemed a mere phantom by all. Nor would he have acted in a manner worthy of himself, had he who is Life, the Word, and the Power of God, abandoned this interpreter of himself to corruption and death.

3 Nor, again, would his warfare with the spirits of evil have received its consummation by conflict. with the power of death. The place of his retirement must have remained unknown; nor would his existence have been believed by those who had not seen him for themselves. No proof would have been given that he was superior to death nor would he have delivered mortality from the law of its natural infirmity. His name had never been heard throughout the world nor could he have inspired his disciples with contempt of death, or encouraged those who embraced his doctrine to hope for the enjoyment of a future life with God. Nor would he have fulfilled the assurances of his own promise, nor have accomplished the predictions of the prophets concerning himself. Nor would he have undergone the last conflict of all; for this was to be the struggle with the power of death.
4 For all these reasons, then, and inasmuch as it was necessary that the mortal body which had rendered such service to the Divine Word should meet with an end worthy its sacred occupant, the manner of his death was ordained accordingly. For since but two alternatives remained: either to consign his body entirely to corruption, and so to bring the scene of life to a dishonored close, or else to prove himself victorious over death, and render mortality immortal by the act of Divine power; the former of these alternatives would have contravened his own promise. For as it is not the property of fire to cool, nor of light to darken, no more is it compatible with life, to deprive of life, or with Divine intelligence, to act in a manner contrary to reason. For how would it be consistent,with reason, that he who had promised life to others, should permit his own body, the form which he had chosen, to perish beneath the power of corruption? That he who had inspired his disciples with hopes of immortality, should yield this exponent of

his Divine counsels to be destroyed by death?

5 The second alternative was therefore needful I mean, that he should assert his dominion over the power of death. But how? should this be a furtive and secret act, or openly performed and in the sight of all? So mighty an achievement, had it remained unknown and unrevealed, must have failed of its effect as regards the interests of men; whereas the same event, if openly declared and understood, would, from its wondrous character, redound to the common benefit of all. With reason, therefore, since it was needful to prove his body victorious over death, and that not secretly but before the eyes of men, he shrank not from the trial, for this indeed would have argued fear, and a sense of inferiority to the power of death, but maintained that conflict with the enemy which has rendered mortality immortal; a conflict undertaken for the life, the immortality, the salvation of all.

6 Suppose one desired to show us that a vessel could resist the force of fire; how could he better prove the fact than by casting it into the furnace and thence withdrawing it entire and unconsumed? Even thus the Word of God who is the source of life to all, desiring to prove the triumph of that body over death which he had assumed for man's salvation, and to make this body partake his own life and immortality, pursued a course consistent with this object. Leaving his body for a little while,[78] and delivering it up to death in proof of its mortal nature, he soon redeemed it from death, in vindication of that Divine power whereby he has manifested the immortality which he has promised to be utterly beyond the sphere of death.

7 The reason of this is clear. It was needful that his disciples should receive ocular proof of the certainty of that resurrection on which he had taught them to rest their hopes as a motive for rising superior to the fear of

death. It was indeed most needful that they who purposed to pursue a life of godliness should receive a clear impression of this essential truth: more needful still for those who were destined to declare his name in all the world, and to communicate to mankind that knowledge of God which he had before ordained for all nations.
8 For such the strongest conviction of a future life was necessary, that they might be able with fearless and unshrinking zeal to maintain the conflict with Gentile and polytheistic error: a conflict the dangers of which they would never, have been prepared to meet, except as habituated to the contempt of death. Accordingly, in arming his disciples against the power of this last enemy, he delivered not his doctrines in mere verbal precepts, nor attempted to prove the soul's immortality, by persuasive and probable arguments; but displayed to them in his own person a real victory over death.
9 Such was the first and greatest reason of our Saviour's conflict with the power of death, whereby he proved to his disciples the nothingness of that which is the terror of all mankind, and afforded a visible evidence of the reality of that life which he had promised; presenting as it were a first-fruit of our common hope, of future life and immortality in the presence of God.
10 The second cause of his resurrection was, that the Divine power might be manifested which dwelt in his mortal body. Mankind had heretofore conferred Divine honors on men who had yielded to the power of death, and had given the titles of gods and heroes to mortals like themselves. For this reason, therefore, the Word of God evinced his gracious character, and proved to man his own superiority over death, recalling his mortal body to a second life, displaying an immortal triumph over death in the eyes of all, and teaching them to acknowledge the Author of such a victory to be the only true God, even in

death itself.

11 I may allege yet a third cause of the Saviour's death. He was the victim offered to the Supreme Sovereign of the universe for the whole human race: a victim consecrated for the need of the human race, and for the overthrow of the errors of demon worship. For as soon as the one holy and mighty sacrifice, the sacred body of our Saviour, had been slain for man, to be as a ransom for all nations, heretofore involved in the guilt of impious superstition, thenceforward the power of impure and unholy spirits was utterly abolished, and every earth-born and delusive error was at once weakened and destroyed.

12 Thus, then, this salutary victim taken from among themselves, I mean the mortal body of the Word, was offered on behalf of the common race of men. This was that sacrifice delivered up to death, of which the sacred oracles speak: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."[79] And again, as follows: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is dumb." They declare also the cause, saying: "He bears our sins, and is pained for us: yet we accounted him to be in trouble, and in suffering, and in affliction. But he was wounded on account of our sins, and bruised because of our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; *and* by his bruises we were healed. All we as sheep have gone astray; every one has gone astray in this way; and the Lord gave him up for our sins."[80]

13 Such were the causes which led to the offering of the human body of the Word of God. But forasmuch as he was the great high priest, consecrated to the Supreme Lord and King, and therefore more than a victim, the Word, the Power, and the Wisdom of God; he soon recalled his body from the grasp of death, presented it to his Father as the first-fruit of our common salvation, and

raised this trophy, a proof at once of his victory over death and Satan, and of the abolition of human sacrifices, for the blessing of all mankind.

Chapter XVI.

1 And now the time is come for us to proceed to the demonstration of these things; if indeed such truths require demonstration, and if the aid of testimony be needful to confirm the certainty of palpable facts. Such testimony, however, shall be here given; and let it be received with an attentive and gracious ear.

2 Of old the nations of the earth, the entire human race, were variously distributed into provincial, national, and local governments,[81] subject to kingdoms and principalities of many kinds. The consequences of this variety were war and strife, depopulation and captivity, which raged in country and city with unceasing fury. Hence, too, the countless subjects of history, adulteries, and rapes of women; hence the woes of Troy, and the ancient tragedies, so known among all peoples.

3 The origin of these may justly be ascribed to the delusion of polytheistic error. But when that instrument of our redemption, the thrice holy body of Christ, which proved itself superior to all Satanic fraud, and free from evil both in word and deed, was raised, at once for the abolition of ancient evils, and in token of his victory over the powers of darkness; the energy of these evil spirits was at once destroyed. The manifold forms of government, the tyrannies and republics, the siege of cities, and devastation of countries caused thereby, were now no more, and one God

4 was proclaimed to all mankind. At the same time one universal power, the Roman empire, arose and flourished, while the enduring and implacable hatred of nation against nation was now removed: and as the knowledge of one God, and one way of religion and

salvation, even the doctrine of Christ, was made known to all mankind; so at the self-same period, the entire dominion of the Roman empire being vested in a single sovereign, profound peace reigned throughout the world. And thus, by the express appointment of the same God, two roots of blessing, the Roman empire, and the doctrine of Christian piety, sprang up together for the benefit of men.

5 For before this time the various countries of the world, as Syria, Asia, Macedonia, Egypt, and Arabia, had been severally subject to different rulers. The Jewish people, again, had established their dominion in the laud of Palestine. And these nations, in every village, city, and district, actuated by some insane spirit, were engaged in incessant and murderous war and conflict. But two mighty powers, starting from the same point, the Roman empire, which henceforth was swayed by a single sovereign, and the Christian religion, subdued and reconciled these contending elements.

6 Our Saviour's mighty power destroyed at once the many governments and the many gods of the powers of darkness, and proclaimed to all men, both rude and civilized, to the extremities of the earth, the sole sovereignty of God himself. Meantime the Roman empire, the causes of multiplied governments being thus removed, effected an easy conquest of those which yet remained; its object being to unite all nations in one harmonious whole; an object in great measure already secured, and destined to be still more perfectly attained, even to the final conquest of the ends of the habitable world, by means of the salutary doctrine, and through the aid of that Divine power which facilitates and smooths its way.

7 And surely this must appear a wondrous fact to those who will examine the question in the love of truth, and

desire not to cavil at these blessings.[82] The falsehood of demon superstition was convicted: the inveterate strife and mutual hatred of the nations was removed: at the same time One God, and the knowledge of that God, were proclaimed to all: one universal empire prevailed; and the whole human race, subdued by the controlling power of peace and concord, received one another as brethren, and responded to the feelings of their common nature. Hence, as children of one God and Father, and owning true religion as their common mother, they saluted and welcomed each other with words of peace. Thus the whole world appeared like one well-ordered and united family: each one might journey unhindered as far as and whithersoever he pleased: men might securely travel from West to East, and from East to West, as to their own native country: in short, the ancient oracles and predictions of theprophets were fulfilled, more numerous than we can at present cite, and those especially which speak as follows concerning the saving Word. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." And again, "In his days shall righteousness spring up; and abundance of peace." "And they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into sickles: and nation shall not take up sword against nation, neither shall they learn to war any more."[83]

8 These words, predicted ages before in the Hebrew tongue, have received in our own day a visible fulfillment, by which the testimonies of the ancient oracles are clearly confirmed. And now, if thou still desire more ample proof, receive it, not in words, but from the facts themselves. Open the eyes of thine understanding expand the gates of thought; pause awhile, and consider; inquire of thyself as though thou weft another, and thus diligently examine the nature of the

case. What king or prince in any age of the world, what philosopher, legislator, or prophet, in civilized or barbarous lands, has attained so great a height of excellence, I say not after death, but while living still, and full of mighty power, as to fill the ears and tongues of all mankind with the praises of his name? Surely none save our only Saviour has done this, when, after his victory over death, he spoke the word to his followers, and fulfilled it by the event, saying to them, "Go ye, and make disciples of all nations in my name."[84] He it was who gave the distinct assurance, that his gospel must be preached in all the world for a tes testimony to all nations, and immediately verifiedhis word: for within a little time the world itself was filled with his doctrine.
9 How, then, will those who caviled at the commencement of my speech be able to reply to this? For surely the force of ocular testimony is superior to any verbal argument. Who else than he, with an invisible and yet potent hand, has driven from human society like savage beasts that ever noxious and destructive tribe of evil spirits who of old had made all nations their prey, and by the motions of their images had practiced many a delusion among men? Who else, beside our Saviour, by the invocation of his name, and by unfeigned prayer addressed through him to the Supreme God, has given power to banish from the world the remnant of those wicked spirits to those who with genuine and sincere obedience pursue the course of life and conduct which he has himself prescribed? Who else but our Saviour has taught his followers to offer those bloodless and reasonable sacrifices which are performed by prayer and the secret worship of God?
10 Hence is it that throughout the habitable world altars are erected, and churches dedicated, wherein these spiritual and rational sacrifices are offered as a sacred

service by every nation to the One Supreme God. Once more, who but he, with invisible and secret power, has suppressed and utterly abolished those bloody sacrifices which were offered with fire and smoke, as well as the cruel and senseless immolation of human victims; a fact which is attested by the heathen historians themselves? For it was not till after the publication of the Saviour's Divine doctrine, about the time of Hadrian's reign, that the practice of human sacrifice was universally abandoned.

11 Such and so manifest are the proofs of our Saviour's power and energy after death. Who then can be found of spirit so obdurate as to withhold his assent to the truth, and refuse to acknowledge his life to be Divine? Such deeds as I have described are done by the living, not the dead; and visible acts are to us as evidence of those which we cannot see. It is as it were an event of yesterday that an impious and godless race disturbed and confounded the peace of human society, and possessed mighty power. But these, as soon as life departed, lay prostrate on the earth, worthless as dung, breathless, motionless, bereft of speech, and have left neither fame nor memorial behind. For such is the condition of the dead; and he who no longer lives is nothing: and how can he who is nothing be capable of any act? But how shall his existence be called in question, whose active power and energy are greater than in those who are still alive? And though he be invisible to the natural eye, yet the discerning faculty is not in outward sense. We do not comprehend the rules of art, or the theories of science, by bodily sensation; nor has any eye yet discerned the mind of man. Far less, then, the power of God: and in such cases our judgment is formed from apparent results.

12 Even thus are we bound to judge of our Saviour's invisible power, and decide by its manifest effects

whether we shall acknowledge the mighty operations which he is even now carrying on to be the works of a living agent; or whether they shall be ascribed to one who has no existence; or, lastly, whether the inquiry be not absurd and inconsistent in itself. For with what reason can we assert the existence of one who is not? Since all allow that that which has no existence is devoid of that power, and energy, and action, for these are characteristics of the living, but the contrary is characteristic of the dead.

Chapter XVII.

1 And now the time is come for us to consider the works of our Saviour in our own age, and to contemplate the living operations of the living God. For how shall we describe these mighty works save as living proofs of the power of a living agent, who truly enjoys the life of God? If any one inquire the nature of these works, let him now attend.

2 But recently a class of persons, impelled by furious zeal, and backed by equal power and military force, evinced their enmity against God, by destroying his churches, and overthrowing from their foundations the buildings dedicated to his worship. In short, in every way they directed their attacks against the unseen God, and assailed him with a thousand shafts of impious words. But he who is invisible avenged himself with an invisible hand.

3 By the single fiat of his will his enemies were utterly destroyed, they who a little while before had been flourishing in great prosperity, exalted by their fellow men as worthy of divine honor, and blessed with a continued period of power and glory,[85] so long as they had maintained peace and amity with him whom they afterwards opposed. As soon, however, as they dared openly to resist his will, and to set their gods in array

against him whom we adore; immediately, according to the will and power of that God against whom their arms were raised, they all received the judgment due to their audacious deeds. Constrained to yield and flee before his power, together they acknowledged his Divine nature, and hastened to reverse the measures which they had before essayed.

4 Our Saviour, therefore, without delay erected trophies of this victory everywhere, and once more adorned the world with holy temples and consecrated houses of prayer; in every city and village, nay, throughout all countries, and even in barbaric wilds, ordaining the erection of churches and sacred buildings to the honor of the Supreme God and Lord of all. Hence it is that these hallowed edifices are deemed worthy to bear his name, and receive not their appellation from men, but from the Lord himself, from which circumstances they are called churches (or houses of the Lord).[86]

5 And now let him who will stand forth and tell us who, after so complete a desolation, has restored these sacred buildings from foundation to roof? Who, when all hope appeared extinct, has caused them to rise on a nobler scale than heretofore? And well may it claim our wonder, that this renovation was not subsequent to the death of those adversaries of God, but whilst the destroyers of these edifices were still alive; so that the recantation of their evil deeds came in their own words and edicts.[87] And this they did, not in the sunshine of prosperity and ease (for then we might suppose that benevolence or clemency might be the cause), but at the very time that they were suffering under the stroke of Divine vengeance.

6 Who, again, has been able to retain in obedience to his heavenly precepts, after so many successive storms of persecution, nay, in the very crisis of danger, so many

persons throughout the world devoted to philosophy, and the service of God and those holy choirs of virgins who had dedicated themselves to a life of perpetual chastity and purity? Who taught them cheerfully to persevere in the exercise of protracted fasting, and to embrace a life of severe and consistent self-denial? Who has persuaded multitudes of either sex to devote themselves to the study of sacred things, and prefer to bodily nutriment that intellectual food which is suited to the wants of a rational soul?[88] Who has instructed barbarians and peasants, yea, feeble women, slaves, and children, in short, unnumbered multitudes of all nations, to live in the contempt of death; persuaded of the immortality of their souls, conscious that human actions are observed by the unerring eye of justice, expecting God's award to the righteous and the wicked, and therefore true to the practice of a just and virtuous life? For they could not otherwise have persevered in the course of godliness. Surely these are the acts which our Saviour, and he alone, even now performs.
7 And now let us pass from these topics, and endeavor by inquiries such as these that follow to convince the objector's obdurate understanding. Come forward, then, whoever thou art, and speak the words of reason: utter, not the thoughts of a senseless heart, but those of an intelligent and enlightened mind: speak, I say, after deep solemn converse with thyself. Who of the sages whose names have yet been known to fame, has ever been foreknown and proclaimed from the remotest ages, as our Saviour was by the prophetic oracles to the once divinely-favored Hebrew nation? But his very birth-place, the period of his advent the manner of his life, his miracles, and words and mighty acts, were anticipated and recorded in the sacred volumes of these prophets.
8 Again, who so present an avenger of crimes against

himself; so that, as the immediate consequence of their impiety, the entire Jewish people were scattered by an unseen power, their royal seat utterly removed, and their very temple with its holy things levelled with the ground? Who, like our Saviour, has uttered predictions at once concerning that impious nation and the establishment of his church throughout the world, and has equally verified both by the event? Respecting the temple of these wicked men, our Saviour said: "Your house is left unto you desolate":[89] and, "There shall not be left one stone upon another in this place, that shall not be thrown down."[90] And again, of his church he says: "I will build my church upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[91]

9 How wondrous, too, must that power be deemed which summoned obscure and unlettered men from their fisher's trade, and made them the legislators and instructors of the human race! And how clear a demonstration of his deity do we find in the promise so well performed, that he would make them fishers of men: in the power and energy which he bestowed, so that they composed and published writings of such authority that they were translated into every civilized and barbarous language,[92] were read and pondered by all nations, and the doctrines contained in them accredited as the oracles of God!

10 How marvelous his predictions of the future, and the testimony whereby his disciples were forewarned that they should be brought before kings and rulers, and should endure the severest punishments, not indeed as criminals, but simply for their confession of his name! Or who shall adequately describe the power with which he prepared them thus to suffer with a willing mind, and enabled them, strong in the armor of godliness, to maintain a constancy of spirit indomitable in the midst of conflict?

11 Or how shall we enough admire that steadfast firmness of soul which strengthened, not merely his immediate followers, but their successors also, even to our present age, in the joyful endurance of every infliction, and every form of torture, in proof of their devotion to the Supreme God? Again, what monarch has prolonged his government through so vast a series of ages? Who else has power to make war after death, to triumph over every enemy, to subjugate each barbarous and civilized nation and city, and to subdue his adversaries with an invisible and secret hand?
12 Lastly, and chief of all, what slanderous lip shall dare to question that universal peace to which we have already referred; established by his power throughout the world[93] For thus the mutual concord and harmony of all nations coincided in point of time with the extension of our Saviour's doctrine and preaching in all the world: a concurrence of events predicted in long ages past by the prophets of God. The day itself would fail me, gracious emperor, should I attempt to exhibit in a single view those cogent proofs of our Saviour's Divine power which even now are visible in their effects; for no human being, in civilized or barbarous nations, has ever yet exhibited such power of Divine virtue as our Saviour.
13 But why do I speak of men, since of the beings whom all nations have deemed divine, none has appeared on earth with power like to his? If there has, let the fact now be proved. Come forward, ye philosophers, and tell us what god or hero has yet been known to fame, who has delivered the doctrines of eternal life and a heavenly kingdom as he has done who is our Saviour? Who, like him, has persuaded multitudes throughout the world to pursue the principles of Divine wisdom, to fix their hope on heaven itself, and look forward to the mansions there reserved for them that love God? What god or hero in

human form has ever held his course from the rising to the setting sun, a course co-extensive as it were with the solar light, and irradiated mankind with the bright and glorious beams of his doctrine, causing each nation of the earth to render united worship to the One true God? What god or hero yet, as he has done, has set aside all gods and heroes among civilized or barbarous nations; has ordained that divine honors should be withheld from all, and claimed obedience to that command: and then, though singly conflicting with the power of all, has utterly destroyed the opposing hosts; victorious over the gods and heroes of every age, and causing himself alone,in every region of the habitable world, to be acknowledged by all people as the only Son of God?
14 Who else has commanded the nations inhabiting the continents and islands of this mighty globe to assemble weekly on the Lord's day, and to observe it as a festival, not indeed for the pampering of the body, but for the invigoration of the soul by instruction in Divine truth? What god or hero, exposed, as our Saviour was, to so sore a conflict, has raised the trophy of victory over every foe? For they indeed, from first to last, unceasingly assailed his doctrine and his people: but he who is invisible, by the exercise of a secret power, has raised his servants and the sacred houses of their worship to the height of glory.
But why should we still vainly aim at detailing those Divine proofs of our Saviour's power which no language can worthily express; which need indeed no words of ours, but themselves appeal in loudest tones to those whose mental ears are open to the truth? Surely it is a strange, a wondrous fact, unparalleled in the annals of human life; that the blessings we have described should be accorded to our mortal race, and that he who is in truth the only, the eternal Son of God, should thus be

visible on earth.

Chapter XVIII.

1 These words of ours, however, [gracious] Sovereign, may well appear superfluous in your ears, convinced as you are, by frequent and personal experience, of our Saviour's Deity; yourself also, in actions still more than words, a herald of the truth to all mankind. Yourself, it may be, will vouchsafe at a time of leisure to relate to us the abundant manifestations which your Saviour has accorded you of his presence, and the oft-repeated visions of himself which have attended you in the hours of sleep. I speak not of those secret suggestions which to us are unrevealed: but of those principles which he has instilled into your own mind, and which are fraught with general interest and benefit to the human race. You will yourself relate in worthy terms the visible protection which your Divine shield and guardian has extended in the hour of battle; the ruin of your open and secret foes; and his ready aid in time of peril. To him you will ascribe relief in the midst of perplexity; defence in solitude; expedients in extremity; foreknowledge of events yet future; your fore-thought for the general weal; your power to investigate uncertain questions; your conduct of most important enterprises; your administration of civil affairs; your military arrangements, and correction of abuses in all departments; your ordinances respecting public right; and, lastly, your legislation for the common benefit of all. You will, it may be, also detail to us those particulars of his favor which are secret to us, but known to you alone, and treasured in your royal memory as in secret storehouses. Such, doubtless, are the reasons, and such the convincing proofs of your Saviour's power, which caused you to raise that sacred edifice which presents to all, believers and unbelievers alike, a trophy of his victory over death, a holy temple of the holy God:

to consecrate those noble and splendid monuments of immortal life and his heavenly kingdom: to offer memorials of our Almighty Saviour's conquest which well become the imperial dignity of him by whom they are bestowed. With such memorials have you adorned that edifice which witnesses of eternal life: thus, as it were in imperial characters, ascribing victory and triumph to the heavenly Word of God: thus proclaiming to all nations, with clear and unmistakable voice, in deed and word, your own devout and pious confession of his name.